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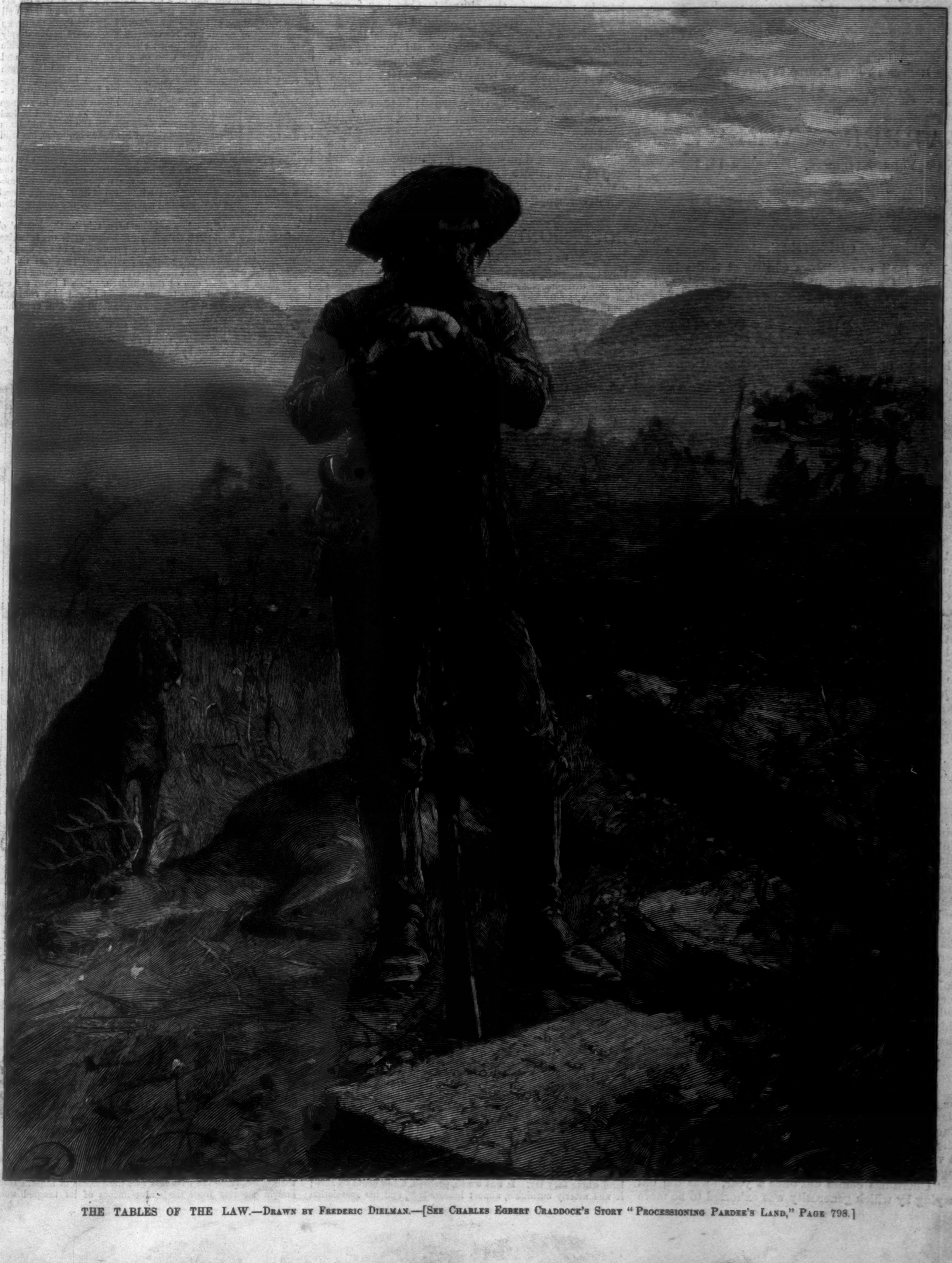

THE TABLES OF THE LAW.—Drawn by Frederic Dielman.—[See Charles Egbert Craddock's Story "Processioning Pardee's Land," Page 798.]

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HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE,

AN ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY.

CHRISTMAS NUMBER

(WITH EIGHT-PAGE SUPPLEMENT).

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HARPER'S WEEKLY.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1886.

*An* ILLUSTRATED EIGHT-PAGE SUPPLEMENT *is issued gratuitously with this number of* HARPER'S WEEKLY.

## CHRISTMAS.

AMONG all our holidays Christmas is the happiest. Other days, like the Fourth of July and Decoration Day, have a patriotic association which is inspiring, and New-year's Day has an admonitory significance which is pathetic. But the tradition of Christmas is more universal and ideal than that of other holidays, because it is the feast of fraternity, of human sympathy and helpfulness. Not only is its sentiment glory to God, but its distinctive gospel is peace on earth and good-will to man. It is the one day in the year on which selfishness is the most odious sin. Its peculiar observance is obvious, palpable, active thought of others. We all live under the general law of charity and of doing good. But this is the day on which we must make sure that our light shines so that men shall see our good works. WENDELL PHILLIPS, when asked to write a sentiment in autograph albums, often wrote:

"Count that day lost whose low descending sun
Views from thy hand no worthy action done."

But Christmas is the day which permits no discretion nor delay in that duty. If he who at any time gives quickly doubles his gift, he who does not give at Christmas is doubly guilty. The community surrenders itself to a sentiment and owns its power. John Bull pretends to be very skeptical of sentiment, but it is he who has given the character to this day. It has become in effect an English holiday; that is to say, a holiday which derives its peculiar character from English usages, traditions, and literature.

As commemorating the birth of the founder of the Christian religion, it is a religious feast. But in the popular apprehension its religious character has been superseded by its social and charitable significance. It has become the feast of good-fellowship in the highest sense—good-fellowship with a religious sanction. Nominally it is the birthday of the founder of Christianity. Practically it is the day of Saint Nicholas, the feast of Santa Claus. Historically it is the blending of the earlier and the later dispensations, the mingling of heathen and Christian symbols. The Yule-log was kindled by a spark from the Druids' altar. The pagan boar's head is brought in with Christian carols. The Christian doctrine is the subjugation of the flesh. The Christmas celebration is the enjoyment of the senses. But the religious aspect and feeling consecrate the day and complete it. Is the essential charm of the festival the consciousness that it does full justice to human nature, that it tempers the asceticism of the religious tendency, and asserts the due importance of sense and pleasure, and holds that a joyous benevolence is no less a religious service than the flagellation and mortification and sad penance of the fasting neophyte? To assert that this is a tendency which requires no fostering, and that the gods of pleasure are always sure of their worship, is to forget that whether

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less,"

or not, yet the presentation of religion and of Christianity as unsmiling and immitigable, requiring the surrender of all but the more serious impulses, and the constant doing of all that we desire not to do, is a view from which the human soul gladly takes refuge in the cheerfulness of Christmas.

"Christmas comes but once a year," was the old saying by which generosity was exhorted to be more generous, and to broach another barrel. But the spirit of Christmas shows itself to be so truly benignant and beneficent upon its own day that it might well be entreated to come more than once a year. Why not on every day? It would be inconvenient, undoubtedly, to have a perpetual Christmas tree, and to hang the stocking every night by the hearth, and to listen for the tinkling bells of the airy reindeer. The Christmas tree could hardly come to fruit every morning, the disappointed stocking would hang limp, and how could the faintest sound of the bells of Santa Claus be heard in the dog-days? But the perpetual presence of the spirit of Christmas would not imply perpetual snap-dragon and kissing under the mistletoe. The spirit of Christmas is that of charity, and what an astounding revolution it would effect if that spirit should enter into every department of life for one year! Imagine the results of actual charity in society, in politics, in the church! Can any fancy properly depict Mrs. Grundy speaking of her "friends" in the spirit of Christmas, or a political party taking a fair or generous view of the other side, or one sect sinning by an excess of kind feeling for another? In trade suppose the rule of *caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware—to be suspended; in politics, the maxim of the Devil take the hindmost to be spurned; in the church, the exhortation, little children, love one another, to be obeyed. The imagination reels before such a millennial suggestion. The spectacle would work the miracle that seemed impossible, for Santa Claus would hasten at midsummer to see, and would stay during the sight, and the old saying would be transfigured into a new form, "Christmas comes all the year."

## PROCESSIONING PARDEE'S LAND.

—BY CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK.

UPON the steep slope of a certain "bald" among the Great Smoky Mountains there lie, just at the verge of the strange stunted woods from which the treeless dome emerges to touch the clouds, two great tilted blocks of sandstone. They are of marked regularity of shape, as square as if hewn with a chisel. Both are splintered and fissured; one is broken in twain. No other rock is near. The earth in which they are embedded is the rich black soil not unfrequently found upon the summits. Nevertheless no great significance might seem to attach to their isolation—an outcropping of ledges, perhaps; a fracture of the freeze; a trace of ancient denudation by the waters of the spring in the gap, flowing now down the trough of the gorge in a silvery braid of currents, and with a murmur that is earnest of a song.

It may have been some distortion of the story heard only from the lips of the circuit rider, some fantasy of tradition invested with the urgency of fact, but Roger Pardee could not remember the time when he did not believe that these were the stone tables of the Law that Moses flung down from the mountain-top in his wrath. In the dense ignorance of the mountaineer, and his secluded life, he knew of no foreign countries, no land holier than the land of his home. There was no incongruity in his mind that it should have been in the solemn silence and austere solitude of the "bald," in the magnificent ascendency of the Great Smoky, that the law-giver had met the Lord and spoken with Him. Often as he lay at length on the strange barren place, veiled with the clouds that frequented it, a sudden sunburst in their midst would suggest anew what supernal splendors had once been here vouchsafed to the faltering eye of man. The illusion had come to be very dear to him; in this insistent localization of his faith it was all very near. And so he would go down to the slope below, among the weird, stunted trees, and look once more upon the broken tables, and ponder upon the strange signs written by time thereon. The insistent fall of the rain, the incisive blasts of the wind, coming again and again, though the centuries went, were registered here in mystic runes. The surface had weathered to a whitish-gray, but still in tiny depressions its pristine dark color showed in rugose characters. A splintered fissure held delicate fucoid impressions in fine script full of meaning. A series of worm-holes traced erratic hieroglyphics across a scaling corner; all the varied texts were illuminated by quartzose particles glittering in the sun, and here and there fine green grains of glauconite. He knew no names like these, and naught of meteorological influences. He had studied no other rock. His casual notice had been arrested nowhere by similar signs. Under the influence of his ignorant superstition, his cherished illusion, the lonely wilderness, what wonder that, as he pondered upon the stones, strange mysteries seemed revealed to him? He found significance in these cabalistic scriptures—nay, he read inspired words! With the ramrod of his gun he sought to follow the fine tracings of the letters writ by the finger of the Lord on the stone tables that Moses flung down from the mountain-top in his wrath.

With a devout thankfulness Pardee realized that he owned the land where they lay. It was worth, perhaps, a few cents an acre; it was utterly untillable, almost inaccessible, and his gratulation owed its fervor only to its spiritual values. He was an idle and shiftless fellow, and had known no glow of acquisition, no other pride of possession. He herded cattle much of the time in the summer, and he hunted in the winter—wolves chiefly, their hair being long and finer at this season, and the smaller furry gentry; for he dealt in peltry. And so, despite the vastness of the mountain wilds, he often came and knelt beside the rocks with his rifle in his hand, and sought anew to decipher the mystic legends. His face, bending over the tables of the Law with the earnest research of a student, with the chastened subduement of devotion, with all the calm sentiments of reverie, lacked something of its normal aspect. When a sudden stir of the leaves or the breaking of a twig recalled him to the world, and he would lift his head, it might hardly seem the same face, so heavy was the lower jaw, so insistent and coercive his eye. But if he took off his hat to place therein his cotton bandana handkerchief or (if he were in luck and burdened with game) the scalp of a wild-cat—valuable for the bounty offered by the State—he showed a broad, massive forehead that added the complement of expression, and suggested a doubt if it were ferocity his countenance bespoke or force. His long black hair hung to his shoulders, and he wore a tangled black beard; his deep-set dark blue eyes were kindled with the fires of imagination. He was tall, and of a commanding presence but for his stoop and his slouch. His garments seemed a trifle less well ordered than those of his class, and bore here and there the traces of the blood of beasts; on his trousers were grass stains deeply grounded, for he knelt often to get a shot, and in meditation beside the rocks. He spent little time otherwise upon his knees, and perhaps it was some intuition of this fact that roused the wrath of certain brethren of the camp-meeting when he suddenly appeared among them, arrogating to himself peculiar spiritual experiences, proclaiming that his mind had been opened to strange lore, repeating thrilling, quickening words that he declared he had read on the dead rocks whereon were graven the commandments of the Lord. The tumultuous tide of his rude eloquence, his wild imagery, his ecstasy of faith, rolled over the assembly and awoke it anew to enthusiasms. Much that he said was accepted by the more intelligent clergy who led the meeting as figurative, as the finer fervors of truth, and they felt the responsive glow of emotion and quiver of sympathy. He intended it in its simple, literal significance. And to the more local members of the congregation the fact was patent.

"Sech a pack o' lies hev seldom been tole in the hearin' o' Almighty Gawd," said Job Grinnell, a few days after the breaking up of camp. He was rehearsing the proceedings at the meeting partly for the joy of hearing himself talk, and partly at the instance of his wife, who had been prevented from attending by the inopportune illness of one of the children. "Ez I loant my ear ter the words o' that thar brazen buzzard I eyed him constant. Fur I looked ter see the jedgmint o' the Lord descend upon him like S'phira an' An'ias."

"*Who?*" asked his wife, pausing in her task of picking up chips. He had spoken of them so familiarly that one might imagine they lived close by in the cove.

"SHE APPLIED HER THIN, FRECKLED LITTLE FACE TO THE CRACK BETWEEN THE RAILS."

"An'ias an' S'phira—them in the Bible ez war streck by lightnin' fur lyin'," he explained.

"I 'member *her*," she said. "S'phia, I calls her."

"Waal, A'gusta, *S'phira* do me jes ez well," he said, with the momentary sulkiness of one corrected. "Thar war a man along, though. An' 'pears ter me thar war powerful leetle jestice in thar takin' off, ef Roger Pardee be 'lowed ter stan' up thar in the face o' the meetin' an' lie so ez no yearthly critter in the worl' could b'lieve him—'ceptin' Brother Jacob Page, ez 'peared plumb out'n his head with religion, an' got ter shoutin' when this Pardee tuk ter tellin' the law he read on them rocks—Moses' tables, folks calls 'em—up yander in the mounting."

He nodded upward toward the great looming range above them. His house was on a spur of the mountain, overshadowed by it; shielded. It was to him the Almoner of Fate. One by one it doled out the days, dawning from its summit; and thence, too, came the darkness and the glooms of night. One by one it liberated from the enmeshments of its tangled wooded

heights the constellations to gladden the eye and lure the fancy. Its largess of silver torrents flung down its slopes made fertile the little fields, and bestowed a lilting song on the silence, and took a turn at the mill-wheel, and did not disdain the thirst of the humble cattle. It gave pasturage in summer, and shelter from the winds of the winter. It was the assertive feature of his life; he could hardly have imagined existence without "the mounting."

"Tole what he read on them rocks—yes, sir, ez glib ez swallerin' a persimmon. 'Twarn't the reg'lar ten comman'ments—some cur'ous new texts—jes a-rollin' 'em out ez sanctified ez ef he hed been called ter preach the gospel! An' thar war Brother Eden Bates a-answerin' 'Amen' ter every one. An' Brother Jacob Page: 'Glory, brother! Ye hev received the outpourin' o' the Sperit! Shake hands, brother!' An' sech ez that. Ter hev hearn the commotion they raised about that thar derned lyin' sinner ye'd hev 'lowed the meetin' war held ter glorify him stiddier the Lord."

Job Grinnell himself was a most notorious Christian. Renown, however, with him could never be a superfluity, or even a sufficiency, and he grudged the fame that these strange spiritual utterances were acquiring. He had long enjoyed the distinction of being considered a miraculous convert; his rescue from the wily enticements of Satan had been celebrated with much shaking and clapping of hands, and cries of "Glory," and muscular ecstasy. His religious experiences thenceforth, his vacillations of hope and despair, had been often elaborated amongst the brethren. But his was a conventional soul; its expression was in the formulæ and platitudes of the camp-meeting. They sank into oblivion in the excitement attendant upon Pardee's wild utterances from the mystic script of the rocks.

As Grinnell talked, he often paused in his work to imitate the gesticulatory enthusiasms of the saints at camp. He was a thickset fellow of only medium height, and was called, somewhat invidiously, "a low man." His face was broad, prosaic, good-natured, incapable of any fine gradations of expression. It indicated an elementary rage or a sluggish placidity. He had a ragged beard of a reddish hue, and hair a shade lighter. He wore blue jeans trousers and an unbleached cotton shirt, and the whole system depended on one suspender. He was engaged in skimming a great kettle of boiling sorghum with a perforated gourd, which caught the scum and strained the liquor. The process was primitive; instead of the usual sorghum boiler and furnace, the kettle was propped upon stones laid together so as to concentrate the heat of the fire. His wife was continuously feeding the flames with chips which she brought in her apron from the wood-pile. Her countenance was half hidden in her faded pink sun-bonnet, which, however, did not obscure an expression responsive to that on the man's face. She did not grudge Pardee the salvation he had found; she only grudged him the prestige he had derived from its unique method.

"Why can't the critter elude Satan with less n'ise?" she asked, acrimoniously.

"Edzackly," her husband chimed in.

Now and then both turned a supervisory glance at the sorghum mill down the slope at some little distance, and close to the river. It had been a long day for the old white mare, still trudging round and round the mill; perhaps a long day as well for the two half-grown boys, one of whom fed the machine, thrusting into it a stalk at a time, while the other brought in his arms fresh supplies from the great pile of sorghum cane hard by.

All the door-yard of the little log cabin was bedaubed with the scum of the sorghum which Job Grinnell flung from his perforated gourd upon the ground. The idle dogs—and there were many—would find, when at last disposed to move, a clog upon their nimble feet. They often sat down with a wrinkling of brows and a puzzled expression of muzzle to investigate their gelatinous paws with their tongues, not without certain indications of pleasure, for the sorghum was very sweet; some of them, that had acquired the taste from imitating the children, openly begged.

One, a gaunt hound, hardly seemed so idle; he had a purpose in life, if it might not be called a profession. He lay at length, his paws stretched out before him, his head upon them; his big brown eyes were closed only at intervals; ever and again they opened watchfully at every movement of a small child, ten months old, perhaps, dressed in pink calico, who sat in the shadow formed by the protruding clay and stick chimney, and played by bouncing up and down and waving her fat hands, which seemed a perpetual joy and delight of possession to her. Take her altogether, she was a person of prepossessing appearance, despite her frank display of toothless gums, and around her wide mouth the unseemly traces of sorghum. She had the plumpest graces of dimples in every direction, big blue eyes with long lashes, the whitest possible skin, and an extraordinary pair of pink feet, which she rubbed together in moments of joy as if she had mistaken them for her hands. Although she sputtered a good deal, she had a charming unaffected laugh, with the giggle attachment natural to the young of her sex.

Suddenly there sounded an echo of it, as it were—a shrill, nervous little whinny; the boys whirled round to see whence it came. The persistent rasping noise of the sorghum mill and the bubbling of the caldron had prevented them from hearing an approach. There, quite close at hand, peering through the rails of the fence, was a little girl of seven or eight years of age.

"I wanter kem in an' see you-uns's baby!" she exclaimed, in a high, shrill voice.

She was a forlorn little specimen, very thin and sharp-featured. Her homespun dress was short enough to show how fragile were the long bare legs that supported her. The curtain of her sun-bonnet, which was evidently made for a much larger person, hung down to the hem of her skirt; as she turned and glanced anxiously down the road, evidently suspecting a pursuer, she looked like an erratic sun-bonnet out for a stroll on a pair of borrowed legs.

She turned again suddenly and applied her thin, freckled little face to the crack between the rails. She smiled upon the baby, who smiled in response, and gave a little bounce that might be accounted a courtesy. The younger of the boys left the cane pile and ran up to his brother at the mill, which was close to the fence. "Don't ye let her do it," he said, venomously. "That thar gal is one of the Pardee fambly. I know her. Don't let her in." And he ran back to the cane.

Grinnell had seemed pleased by this homage at the shrine of the family idol; but at the very mention of the "Pardee fambly" his face hardened, an angry light sprang into his eyes, and his gesture in skimming with the perforated gourd the scum from the boiling sorghum was as energetic as if with the action he were dashing the "Pardee fambly" from off the face of the earth. It was an ancient feud; his grandfather and some contemporary Pardee had fallen out about the ownership of certain vagrant cattle; there had been blows and bloodshed; other members of the connection had been dragged into the controversy; summary reprisals were followed by counter-reprisals. Barns were mysteriously fired, hen-roosts robbed, horses unaccountably lamed, sheep feloniously sheared by unknown parties; the feeling widened and deepened, and had been handed down to the present generation with now and then a fresh outrage, on the part of one or the other, to renew and continue the rankling old grudges.

And here stood the hereditary enemy, wanting to pat their baby on the head.

"Naw, sir, ye won't!" exclaimed the boy at the mill, greatly incensed at the boldness of this proposition, glaring at the lean, tender, wistful little face between the rails of the fence.

But the baby, who had not sense enough to know anything about hereditary enemies, bounced and laughed and gurgled and sputtered with glee, and waved her hands, and had never looked fatter or more beguiling.

"I jes wanter pat it wunst," sighed the hereditary enemy, with a lithe writhing of her thin little anatomy in the anguish of denial—"*jes wunst!*"

"Naw, sir!" exclaimed the youthful Grinnell, more insistently than before. He did not continue, for suddenly there came running down the road a boy of his own size, out of breath, and red and angry—the pursuer, evidently, that the hereditary enemy had feared, for she crouched up against the fence with a whimper.

"Kem along away from thar, ye miser'ble little stack o' bones!" he cried, seizing his sister by one hand and giving her a jerk—"a-foolin' round them Grinnells' fence an' a-hankerin' arter thar old baby!"

He felt that the pride of the Pardee family was involved in this admission of envy.

"I jes wanter pat it on the head *wunst*," she sighed.

"Waal, ye won't, now," said the Grinnell boys in chorus.

The Pardee grasp was gentler on the little girl's arm. This was due not to fraternal feeling so much as to loyalty to the clan; "stack o' bones" though she was, they were Pardee bones.

"Kem along," he exhorted her. "A baby ain't nuthin extry, nohow"—he glanced scoffingly at the infantile Grinnell. "The mountings air fairly a-roamin' with 'em."

"We-uns 'ain't got none at our house," whined the sun-bonnet, droopingly, moving off slowly on its legs, which, indeed, seemed borrowed, so unsteady and loath to go they were.

The Grinnell boys laughed aloud, jeeringly and ostentatiously, and the Pardee blood was moved to retort: "We-uns don't want none sech ez that. Nary tooth in her head!"

And indeed the widely stretched babbling lips displayed a vast vacuity of gum.

Job Grinnell, who had listened with an attentive ear to the talk of the children, had nevertheless continued his constant skimming of the scum. Now he rose from his bent posture, tossed the scum upon the ground, and with the perforated gourd in his hand turned and looked at his wife. Augusta had dropped her apron and chips, and stood with folded arms across her breast, her face wearing an expression of exasperated expectancy.

The brothers were humbled and abashed. The wicked scion of the Pardee house, joying to note how true his shaft had sped, was again fitting his bow.

"An' ez bald-headed ez the mounting."

The baby had a big precedent, but although no peculiar shame attaches to the bare pinnacle of the summit, she—despite the difference in size and age—was expected to show up more fully furnished, and in keeping with the rule of humanity and the gentilities of life.

No teeth, no hair, no sign of any: the fact that she was so backward was a sore point with all the family. Job Grinnell suddenly dropped the perforated gourd, and started down toward the fence. The acrimony of the old feud was as a trait born in the blood and bred in the bone. Such hatred as was inherent in him was evoked by his religious jealousies, and the pious sense that he was following the traditions of his elders and upholding the family honor blended in gentlest satisfaction with his personal animosity toward Roger Pardee as he noticed the boy edging off from the fence to a safe distance. He eyed him derisively for a moment.

"Kin ye kerry a message straight?" The boy looked up with an expression of sullen acquiescence, but said nothing. "Ax yer dad—an' ye kin tell him the word kems from me—whether he hev read sech ez this on the lawgiver's stone tables yander in the mounting: 'An' ye shall claim sech ez be yourn, an' yer neighbor's belongings shall ye in no wise boastfully medjure fur yourn, nor look upon it fur covetiousness, nor yit git up a big name in the kentry fur ownin' sech ez be another's.'"

He laughed silently—a twinkling, wrinkling demonstration over all his broad face—a laugh that was younger than the man, and would have befitted a square-faced boy.

The youthful Pardee, expectant of a cuffing, stood his ground more doubtfully still under the insidious thrusts of this strange weapon, sarcasm. He knew that they were intended to hurt; he was wounded primarily in the intention, but the exact lesion he could not locate. He could meet a threat with a bold face, and return a blow with the best. But he was mortified in this failure of understanding, and perplexity cowed him as contention could not. He hung his head with its sullen questioning eyes, and he found great solace in a jagged bit of cloth on the torn bosom of his shirt, which he could turn in his embarrassed fingers.

"Whar be yer dad?" Grinnell asked.

"Up yander in the mounting," replied the subdued Pardee.

"A-readin' of mighty s'prisin' matter writ on the rocks o' the yearth!" exclaimed Grinnell, with a laugh. "Waal, jes keep that sayin' o' mine in yer head, an' tell him when he kems home. An' look a-hyar, ef enny mo' o' his stray shoats kem about hyar, I'll snip thar ears an' gin 'em my mark."

The youth of the Pardee clan meditated on this for a moment. He could not remember that they had missed any shoats. Then the full meaning of the phrase dawned upon him—it was he and the wiry little sister thus demeaned with a porcine appellation, and whose ears were threatened. He looked up at the fence, the little low house, the barn close by, the sorghum mill, the drying leaves of tobacco on the scaffold, the saltatory baby; his eyes filled with helpless tears, that could not conceal the burning hatred he was born to bear them all. He was hot and cold by turns; he stood staring, silent and defiant, motionless, sullen. He heard the melodic measure of the river, with its crystalline keen vibrations against the rocks; the munching teeth of the old mare—allowed to come to a stand-still that the noise of the sorghum mill might not impinge upon the privileges of the quarrel; and the high ecstatic whinny of the little sister waiting on the opposite bank of the river, having crossed the foot-bridge; there the Grinnell baby had chanced to spy her, and had bounced and grinned and sputtered affably. It was she who had made all the trouble, yearning after the Grinnell baby.

He would not stay, however, to be ignominiously beaten, for Grinnell had turned away, and was looking about the ground as if in search of a thick stick. He accounted himself no craven, thus numerically at a disadvantage, to turn shortly about, take his way down the rocky slope, cross the foot-bridge, jerk the forlorn sun-bonnet by one hand and lead her whimpering off, while the round-eyed Grinnell baby stared gravely after her with inconceivable emotions. These presently resulted in her becoming cross, and whining a little, and rubbing her eyes with her fat hands, and smarting from her own ill-treatment, giving a sharp yelp of dismay. The old dog arose and went and sat close by her, eying her solemnly and wagging his tail, as if begging her to observe how content he was. His dignity was somewhat impaired by sudden abrupt snaps at flies, which caused her to wink, stare, and be silent in astonishment.

"Waal, Job Grinnell," exclaimed Augusta, as her husband came back and took the perforated gourd from her hand—for she had been skimming the sorghum in his absence—"ye air the longest-tongued man, ter be so short-legged, I ever see!"

He looked a trifle discomfited. He had deported himself with unwonted decision, conscious that Augusta was looking on, and in truth somewhat supported by the expectation of her approval.

"What ails ye ter say words ye can't abide by—ye 'low ye 'pear so graceful on the back track?"

He bent over the sorghum, silently skimming. His composure was somewhat ruffled, and in throwing away the scum his gesture was of negligent and discursive aim; the boiling fluid bespattered the foot of one of the omnipresent dogs, whose shrieks rent the sky and whose activity on three legs amazed the earth. He ran yelping to Mrs. Grinnell, nearly overturning her in his turbulent demand for sympathy; then scampered across to the boys, who readily enough stopped their work to examine the wounded member and condole with its wheezing proprietor.

"What ye mean, A'gusta? Kase I 'lowed I'd cut thar ears? I ain't foolin'. Kem meddlin' about remarkin' on our chill'n agin, I'll show 'em."

Augusta looked at him in exasperation. "I ain't keerin' ef all the Pardees war deef," she remarked, inhumanly, "but what war them words ye sent fur a message ter Pardee—'bout pridin' on what ain't theirn."

Grinnell in his turn looked at her—but dubiously. However much a man is under the domination of his wife, he is seldom wholly frank. It is in this wise that his individuality is preserved to him. "I war jes' wantin' ter know ef them words war on the rocks," he said with a disingenuousness worthy of a higher culture.

She received this with distrust. "I kin tell ye now—they ain't," she said, discriminatingly; "Pardee's words don't sound like *them*."

"Waal, now, what's the differ?" he demanded, with an indignation natural enough to aspiring human nature detecting a slur upon one's style.

"Waal—" she paused as she knelt down to feed the fire, holding the fragrant chips in her hand; the flame flickered out and lighted up her reflective eyes while she endeavored to express the distinction she felt: "Pardee's words don't sound ter me like the words of a man sech ez men be."

Grinnell wrinkled his brows, trying to follow her here.

"They sound ter me like the words spoke in a dream—the per-nouncings of a vision." Mrs. Grinnell fancied that she too had a gift of biblical phraseology. "They sound ter me like things I hearn whenst I war a-hungered arter righteousness an' seekin' re-ligion, an' bided alone in the wilderness a-waitin' o' the Sperit."

"'Gusta!" suddenly exclaimed her husband, with the cadence of amazed conviction, "ye b'lieve the lie o' that critter, an' that he reads the words o' the Lord on the rock!"

She looked up a little startled. She had been unconscious of the circuitous approaches of credence, and shared his astonishment in the conclusion.

"Waal, sir!" he said, more hurt and cast down than one would have deemed possible. "I'm willin' ter hev it so. I'm jes nuthin' but a sinner an' a fool, ripenin' fur damnation, an' he air a saint o' the yearth!"

Now such sayings as this were frequent upon Job Grinnell's tongue. He did not believe them; their utility was in their challenge to contradiction. Thus they often promoted an increased cordiality of the domestic relations and an accession of self-esteem.

Augusta, however, was tired; the boiling sorghum and the September sun were debilitating in their effects. There was something in the scene with the youthful Pardee that grated upon her half-developed sensibilities. The baby was whimpering outright, and the cow was lowing at the bars. She gave her irritation the luxury of withholding the salve to Grinnell's wounded vanity. She said nothing. The tribute to Pardee went for what it was worth, and he was forced to swallow the humble-pie he had taken into his mouth, albeit it stuck in his throat.

A shadow seemed to have fallen into the moral atmosphere as the gentle dusk came early on. One had a sense as if bereft, remembering that so short a time ago at this hour the sun was still high, and that the full-pulsed summer day throbbed to a climax of color and bloom and redundant life. Now, the scent of harvests was on the air; in the stubble of the sorghum patch she saw a quail's brood more than half grown, now afoot, and again taking to wing with a loud whirring sound. The perfume of ripening muscadines came from the bank of the river. The papaws hung globular among the leaves of the bushes, and the persimmons were reddening. The vermilion sun was low in the sky above the purpling mountains; the stream had changed from a crystalline brown to red, to gold, and now it was beginning to be purple and silver. And this reminded her that the full-moon was up, and she turned to look at it—so pearly and luminous above the jagged ridge-pole of the dark little house on the rise. The sky about it was blue, refining into an exquisitely delicate and ethereal neutrality near the horizon. The baby had fallen asleep, with its bald head on the old dog's shoulder.

After the supper was over, the sorghum fire still burned beneath the great kettle, for the syrup was not yet made, and sorghum-boiling is an industry that cannot be intermitted. The fire in the midst of the gentle shadow and sheen of the night had a certain profane, discordant effect. Pete's ill-defined figure slouching over it while he skimmed the syrup was grimly suggestive of the distillations of strange elixirs and unhallowed liquors, and his simple face, lighted by a sudden darting red flame, had unrecognizable significance, and was of sinister intent. For Pete was detailed to attend to the boiling; the grinding was done, and the old white mare stood still in the midst of the sorghum stubble and the moonlight, as motionless and white as if she were carved in marble. Job Grinnell sat and smoked on the porch.

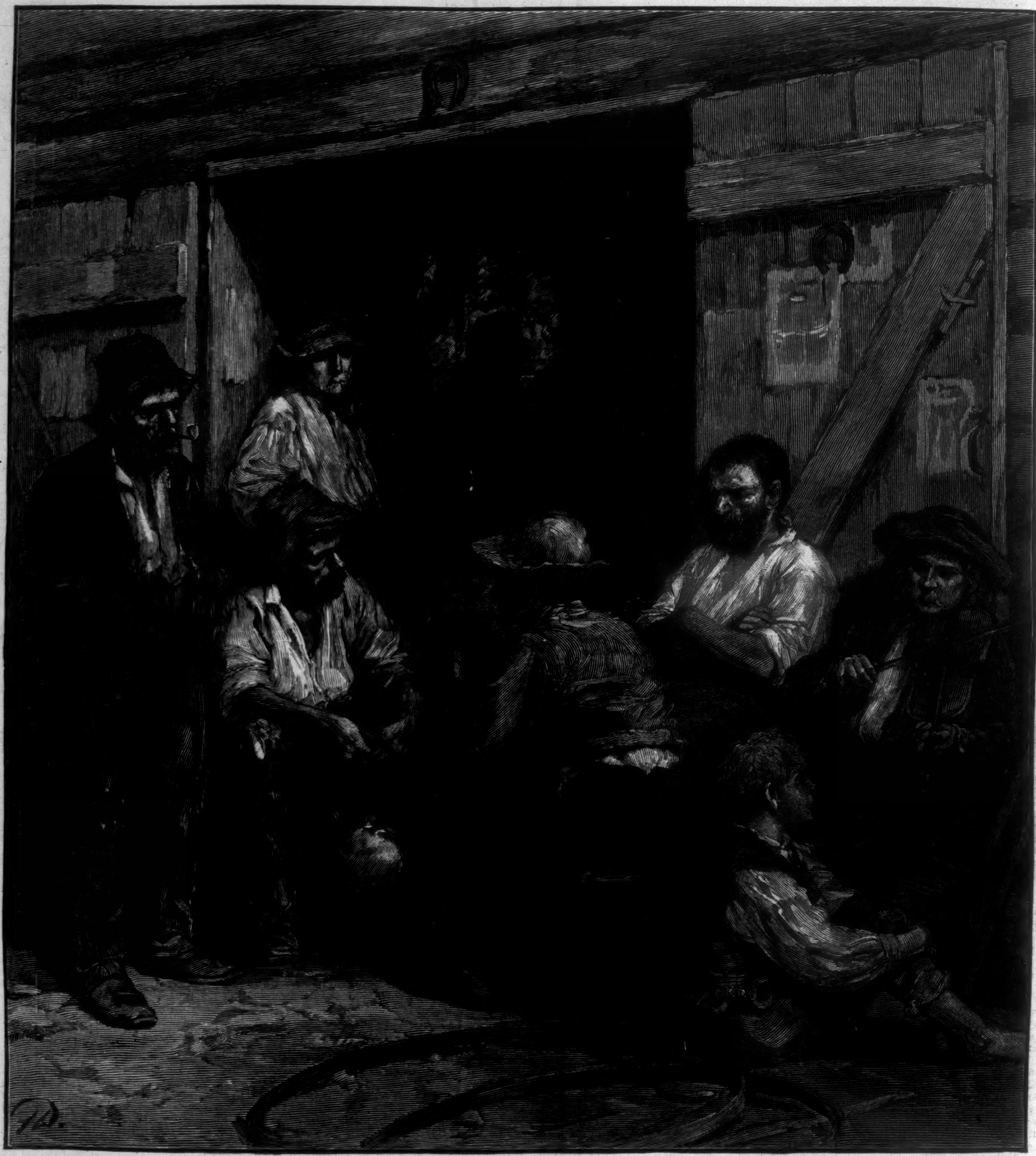
Presently he got up suddenly, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and looked at it carefully before he stuck it into his pocket; for he was one of the men whose pocket linings are singed. Several small but alarming conflagrations had resulted in the minimum of precaution. He went, without a word, down the rocky slope, past the old drowsing mare, and across the foot-bridge. Two or three of the dogs, watching him as he reappeared on the opposite bank, affected a mistake in identity. They growled, then barked outright, and at last ran down and climbed the fence and bounded about it, baying the vista where he had disappeared, until the sleepy old mare turned her head and gazed in mild surprise at them.

Augusta sat on the step of the house, gazing too after him.

She had various regrets in her mind, incipient even before he had quite gone, and now defining themselves momently with added poignancy. A woman who, in her retirement at home, charges herself with the control of a man's conduct abroad, is never likely to be devoid of speculation upon probable disasters to ensue upon any abatement of the activities of her discretion. She was sorry that she had allowed so trifling a matter to mar the serenity of the family; her conscience upbraided her that she had not besought him to avoid the blacksmith's shop, where a coterie of neighbors were wont to congregate and drink deep into the night. Above all, her mind went back to the enigmatical message, and she wondered that she could have been so forgetful as not to urge him to forbear angering Pardee, for this would have a cumulative effect upon all the rancors of the old quarrels, and inaugurate perhaps a new series of reprisals.

"I ain't afeard o' no Pardee ez ever stepped," she said to herself, defining her position. "But I'm fur peace. An' ef the Pardees will leave we-uns be, I ain't a-goin' ter meddle along o' them."

She remembered an old barn-burning, in the days when she and



THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP.—Drawn by Frederic Dielman.

her husband were newly married, at his father's house. She looked up at the tobacco barn hard by, on a line with the dwelling, with that tenderness which one feels for a thing, not because of its value, but for the sake of possession, for the kinship with the objects that belong to the home. A cat was sitting high in a crevice in the logs where the daubing had fallen out; the moon glittered in its great yellow eyes. A frog was leaping along the open space about the rude step at Augusta's feet. A clump of mullein leaves, silvered by the light, spangled by the dew, hid him presently. What an elusive glistening gauze hung over the valley far below; where the sense of distance was limited by the sense of sight!—for it was here only that the night, though so brilliant, must attest the incomparable lucidity of daylight. She could not even distinguish, amidst those soft sheens of the moon and the dew, the Lombardy poplar that grew above the door of old Squire Grove's house down in the cove; in the daytime it was visible like a tiny finger pointing upward. How drowsy was the sound of the katydid, now loudening, now falling, now fainting away! And the tree-toad shrilled in the dog-wood tree. The frogs, too, by the river in iterative fugue sent forth a song as suggestive of the margins as the scent of the fern, and the mint, and the fragrant weeds.

A convulsive start! She did not know that she slept until she was again awake. The moon had travelled many a mile along the highways of the skies. It hung over the purple mountains, over the furthest valley. The cicada had grown dumb. The stars were few and faint. The air was chill. She started to her feet; her garments were heavy with dew. The fire beneath the sorghum kettle had died to a coal, flaring or fading as the faint fluctuations of the wind might will. Near it Pete slumbered where he too had sat down to rest. And Job—Job had never returned.

He had found it a lightsome enough scene at the blacksmith's shop, where it was understood that the neighboring politicians collogued at times, or brethren in the church discussed matters of discipline or more spiritual affairs. In which of these interests a certain corpulent jug was most active it would be difficult perhaps to accurately judge. The great barn-like doors were flung wide open, and there was a group of men half within the shelter and half without; the shoeing-stool, a broken plough, an empty keg, a log, and a rickety chair sufficed to seat the company. The moonlight falling into the door showed the great slouching, darkling figures, the anvil, the fire of the forge (a dim ashy coal), and the shadowy hood merging indistinguishably into the deep duskiness of the interior. In contrast the scene glimpsed through the rude low window at the back of the shop had a certain vivid illuminated effect. A spider web, revealing its geometric perfection, hung half across one corner; the moonbeams without were individualized in fine filar delicacy, like the ravellings of a silver skein. The boughs of a tree which grew on a slope close below almost touched the lintel; the leaves seemed a translucent green; a bird slept on a twig, its head beneath its wing. Back of the cabin, which was situated on a limited terrace or table-land, the great altitudes of the mountain rose into the infinity of the night.

The long drawling conversation was beset, as it were, by faint fleckings of sound, lightly drawn from a crazy old fiddle under the chin of a gaunt, yellow-haired young giant, one Ephraim Blinks, who lolled on a log, and who by these vague harmonies unconsciously gave to the talk of his comrades a certain theatrical effect.

Grinnell slouched up and sat down among them, responding drawlingly to the unceremonious "Hy're, Job?" of the blacksmith, who seemed thus to do the abbreviated honors of the occasion. The others did not so formally notice his coming, and he fell naturally into the conversation.

The subject was the same that had pervaded his own thoughts. He was irritated to observe how Pardee had usurped public attention, and yet he himself listened with keenest interest.

"Waal," said the ponderous blacksmith, "I kin onderstan' mighty well ez Moses would hev been mighty mad ter see them folks a-worshippin' o' a calf—senseless critters they be! 'Twarn't no use flingin' down them rocks, though, an' gittin' 'em bruk. Rock ain't like metal; ye can't melt it an' draw it down an' weld it agin."

His round black head shone in the moonlight, glistening because of his habit of plunging it, by way of making his toilet, into the barrel of water where he tempered his steel. He crossed his huge folded bare arms over his breast, and leaned back against the door on two legs of the rickety chair.

"Naw, sir," assented another. "He mought hev knowed he'd jes hev ter go ter quarryin' agin."

"They air always a-crackin' up them folks in the Bible ez sech powerful wise men," said another, who had in him the germs of advanced thinking. "'Pears ter me ez some of 'em conducted tharselves ez foolish ez enny folks I know—this hyar very Moses one o' 'em. Throwin' down them rocks 'minds me o' old man Pinner's tantrums. Sher'ff kem ter his house 'bout a jedgmint debt, an' levied on his craps. An' arter he war gone old man tuk a axe an' gashed bodaciously inter the loom an' hacked it up. Ez ef that war goin' ter do enny good! His wife war the mos' outed woman I ever see. They 'ain't got nare nother loom nuther, an' hain't hearn no advice from the Lord."

The violinist suddenly paused in his playing. "The Bible 'lowed Moses war a meek man too," he said. "He killed a man with a brick-badge an' buried him in the sand. Mighty meek ways" (satirically).

The others, divining that this was urged in justification and precedent for devious modern ways that were not meek, did not pursue this branch of the subject.

"S'prised me some," remarked the advanced thinker, "ter hear ez them tables o' stone war up on the bald o' the mounting thar. I hed drawed the idee ez 'twar in some other kentry somewhar—I dunno—" He stopped blankly. He could not formulate his geographical ignorance. "An' I never knowed," he resumed, presently, "ez thar war enough gold in Tennessee ter make a gold calf; they fund gold hyar, but 'twar mighty leetle."

"Mebbe 'twar a mighty leetle calf," suggested the blacksmith.

"Mebbe so," assented the other.

"Mebbe 'twar a silver one," speculated a third; "plenty o' silver they 'low thar air in the mountings."

The violinist spoke up suddenly. "Git one o' them Injuns over yander ter Quallatown right seasonable drunk, an' he'll tell ye a power o' places whar the old folks said thar war silver." He bowed his chin once more upon the instrument, and again the slow drawling conversation proceeded to soft music.

"Ef ye'll b'lieve me," said the advanced thinker, "I never war so conflusticated in my life ez I war when he stood up in meetin' an' told 'bout'n the tables o' the law bein' on the bald! I 'lowed 'twar somewhar 'mongst some sort'n people named 'Gyptians."

"Mebbe some o' them Injuns air named 'Gyptians," suggested Spears, the blacksmith.

"Naw, sir," spoke up the fiddler, who had been to Quallatown, and was the ethnographic authority of the meeting. "Tennessee Injuns be named Cher'kee, an' Chick'saw, an' Creeks, an' them's all the sorts o' Injuns ez hev ever been hyarabouts."

There was a silence. The moonlight sifted through the dark little shanty of a shop; the fretting and foaming of a mountain stream arose from far down the steep slope, where there was a series of cascades, a fine water-power, utilized by a mill. The sudden raucous note of a night-hawk jarred upon the air, and a shadow on silent wings sped past. The road was dusty in front of the shop, and for a space there was no shade. Into the full radiance of the moonlight a rabbit bounded along, rising erect upon its haunches with a most human look of affright in its great shining eyes as it tremulously gazed at the motionless figures. It too was motionless for a moment. The young musician made a lunge at it with his bow; it sprang away with a violent start—its elongated grotesque shadow bounding kangaroo-like beside it—into the soft gloom of the bushes. There was no other traveller along the road, and the talk was renewed without further interruption. "Waal, sir," said the blacksmith, passing his hand over his black head, as sleek and shining as a beaver's, "ef 'twarn't fur the testimony o' the words he reads ez air graven on them rocks, I couldn't git my cornsent ter b'lieve ez Moses ever war in Tennessee. I ain't ondertakin' ter say what State he settled in, but I 'lowed 'twarn't hyar. It mus' hev been, though, 'count o' the scripture on them broken tables."

"I never knowed a meetin' woke ter sech a pint o' holiness. The saints jes ramped an' rampaged till it fairly sounded like the cavortin's o' the ungodly," a retrospective voice chimed in.

"I raised thirty-two hyme chunes," said the musician, who had a great gift in quiring, and was the famed possessor of a robust tenor voice. "A leetle mo' gloryin' aroun' an' I'd hev kem ter the eend o' my row, an' hev hed ter begin over agin." He spoke with acrimony, reviewing the jeopardy in which his repertoire had been placed.

"Waal, I'm a-goin' up ter the bald o' the mounting some day soon, ef so be I kin make out ter shoe that mare o' mine"—for the blacksmith's mount was always barefoot—"I'm afeard ter trest her, unshod on them slippery slopes; I want ter read some o' them sayin's on the stone tables myself. I likes ter git a tex' or the eend o' a hyme set a-goin' in my head—seems somehow ter teach itself ter the anvil, an' then it jes says it back an' forth all day. Day 'fore yestiddy I never seen its beat—'Christ—war—born—in—Bethlehem.' The anvil jes rang with that ez ef the actial metal hed the gift o' prayer an' praise."

"Waal, sir," exclaimed Job Grinnell, who had been having frequent colloquies aside with the companionable jug, "ye mought jes ez well save yer shoes an' let yer mare go barefoot. Thar ain't nare sign o' a word writ on them rocks."

They all sat staring at him. Even the singing, long-drawn vibrations of the violin were still.

"By Hokey!" exclaimed the young musician, "I'll take Pardee's word ez soon ez yourn."

The whiskey which Grinnell had drunk had rendered him more plastic still to jealousy. The day was not so long past when Pardee's oath would have been esteemed a poor dependence against the word of so zealous a brother as he—a pillar in the church, a shining light of the congregation. He noted the significant fact that it behooved him to justify himself; it irked him that this was exacted as a tribute to Pardee's newly acquired sanctity.

"Pardee's jes a-lyin' an' a-foolin' ye," he declared. "Ever been up on the bald?"

They had lived in its shadow all their lives. Even by the circuitous mountain ways it was not more than five miles from where they sat. But none had chanced to have a call to go, and it was to them as a foreign land to be explored.

"Waal, I hev, time an' agin. I dunno who gin them rocks the name of Moses' tables o' the Law. I hev known 'em named sech fur many a year. But I seen 'em not three weeks ago, an' thar ain't nare word writ on 'em. Thar's the mounting; thar's the rocks; ye kin go an' stare-gaze 'em an' sati'fy yerse'fs."

Whether it were the cumulative influences of the continual references to the jug, whether that sense of reviviscence, that more alert energy, which the cool Southern nights always impart after the sultry summer days, the suggestion that they should go now and solve the mystery, and meet the dawn upon the summit of the bald, found instant acceptance, which it might not have secured in the stolid daylight.

The moon, splendid, a lustrous white encircled by a great halo of translucent green, swung high above the duskily purple mountains. Below in the valleys its progress was followed by an opalescent gossamer presence that was like the overflowing fulness, the surplusage, of light rather than mist. The shadows of the great trees were interlaced with dazzling silver gleams. The night was almost as bright as the day, but cool and dank, full of sylvan fragrance and restful silence and a romantic liberty.

The blacksmith carried his rifle, for wolves were often abroad in the wilderness. Two or three others were similarly armed; the advanced thinker had a hunting-knife, Job Grinnell a pistol that went by the name of "shootin'-iron." The musician carried no weapon. "I ain't 'feard o' no wolf," he said; "I'll play 'em a chune." He went on in the van, his tousled yellow hair idealized with many a shimmer in the moonlight as it hung curling down on his blue jeans coat, his cheek laid softly on the violin, the bow glancing back and forth as if strung with moonbeams as he played. The men woke the solemn silences with their loud mirthful voices; they startled precipitate echoes; they fell into disputes and wrangled loudly, and would have turned back if sure of the way; but Job Grinnell led steadily on, and they were fain to follow. They lagged to look long at a spot where some man, unheeded even by tradition, had dug his heart's grave in a vain search for precious metal. A deep excavation in the midst of the wilderness told the story; how long ago it was might be guessed from the age of a stalwart oak that had sunk roots into its midst; the shadows were heavy about it; a sense of despair brooded in the loneliness. And so up and up the endless ascent; sometimes great chasms were at one side, stretching further and further, and crowding the narrow path—the herder's trail—against the sheer ascent, till it seemed that the treacherous mountains were yawning to engulf them. The air was growing colder, but was exquisitely clear and exhilarating; the great dewy ferns flung silvery fronds athwart the way; vines in stupendous lengths swung from the tops of gigantic trees to the roots. Hark! among them birds chirp; a matutinal impulse seems astir in the woods; the moon is undimmed; the stars faint only because of her splendors; but one can feel that the earth has roused itself to a sense of a new day. And there, with such feathery flashes of white foam, such brilliant straight lengths of translucent water, such a leaping grace of impetuous motion, the currents of the mountain stream, like the arrows of Diana, shoot down the slopes. And now a vague mist is among the trees, and when it clears away they seem shrunken, as under a spell, to half their size. They grow smaller and smaller still, oak and chestnut and beech, but dwarfed and gnarled like some old orchard. And suddenly they cease, and the vast grassy dome uprises against the sky, in which the moon is paling into a dull similitude of itself; no longer wondrous, transcendent, but like some lily of opaque whiteness, fair and fading. Beneath is a purple, deeply serious, and sombre earth, to which mists minister, silent and solemn; myriads of mountains loom on every hand; the half-seen mysteries of the river, which, charged with the red clay of its banks, is of a tawny color, gleams as it winds in and out among the white vapors that reach in fantastic forms from heaven above to the valley below. There was a certain relief in the mist—it veiled the infinities of the scene, on which the mind could lay but a trembling hold.

"Folks tell all sort'n cur'ous tales 'bout'n this hyar spot," said

"'WHAT WORD DID HE SENT TER—ME?' CRIED PARDEE."—Drawn by Frederic Dielman.

Job Grinnell, his square face, his red hair hanging about his ears, and his ragged red beard visible in the dull light of the coming day. "I hev hearn folks 'low ez a pa'tridge up hyar will look ez big ez a Dominicky rooster. An' ef ye listens ye kin hear words from somewhar. An' sometimes in the cattle-herdin' season the beastises will kem an' crowd tergether, an' stan' on the bald in the moonlight all night."

"I dunno," said the advanced thinker, "ez I be s'prised enny ef Pardee, ez be huntin' up hyar so constant, hev got sorter tetched in the head, ter take up sech a cur'ous notion bout'n them rocks."

He glanced along the slope at the spot, visible now, where Moses flung the stone tables and they broke in twain. And there, standing beside them, was a man of great height, dressed in blue jeans, his broad-brimmed hat pushed from his brow, and his meditative dark eyes fixed upon the rocks; he carried a deer, all gray and antlered, swung upon his shoulders, and his rifle rested on the ground as he leaned on the muzzle.

A glance was interchanged between the others. Their intention, the promptings of curiosity, had flagged during the long tramp and the gradual waning of the influence of the jug. The coincidence of meeting Pardee here revived their interest. Grinnell, remembering the ancient feud, held back, as unlikely to elicit Pardee's views in the face of their contradiction. The blacksmith and the young fiddler took their way down toward him.

He looked up with a start, seeing them at some little distance. His full contemplative eyes rested upon them for a moment almost devoid of questioning. It was not the face of a man who finds himself confronted with the discovery of his duplicity and his hypocrisy. There was a strange doubt stirring in the blacksmith's heart. As he approached he looked upon the storied stones with a sort of solemn awe, as if they had indeed been given by the hand of the Lord to his servant, who broke them here in his wrath. He knew that the step of the musician slackened as he followed. What holy mysteries were they not rushing in upon? He spoke in a bated voice.

"Roger," he said, "we-uns hearn ye tell 'bout the scriptures graven on these hyar tables ez Moses flung down, an' we-uns 'lowed we-uns would kem an' read some fur ourselves."

Pardee did not speak nor hesitate; he moved aside that the blacksmith might stand where he had been—as it were at the foot of the page.

But what transcendent glories thronged the heavens—what august splendors of dawn! Had the sun ever before risen like this, with the sky an emblazonment of red, of gold, of darting gleams of light; with the mountains most royally purple or most radiantly blue; with the prismatic mists in flight; with the slow climax of the dazzling sphere ascending to dominate it all?

The blacksmith knelt down to read. The musician, his silent violin under his chin, leaned over his shoulder. The hunter stood still, expectant.

Alas! the corrugations of time; the fissile results of the frost; the wavering line of ripple-marks of seas that shall ebb no more; growth of lichen; an army of ants in full march; a passion-flower trailing from a crevice, its purple blooms lying upon the gray stone near where it is stamped with the fossil imprint of a sea-weed, faded long ago and forgot. Or is it, alas! for the eyes that can see only this?

The blacksmith looked up with a twinkling leer; the musician recovered his full height, and drew the bow dashingly across the strings; then let his arm fall.

"Roger," the blacksmith said, "dad-burned ef I kin read ennything hyar."

The young violinist looked over his brawny shoulder in silence.

"Whar d'ye make out enny letters, Roger?" persisted Spears.

Pardee leaned over and eagerly pointed with his ramrod to a curious corrugation of the surface. Again the blacksmith bent down; the musician craned forward, his yellow hair hanging about his bronzed face.

"I hev been toler'ble well acquainted with the alphabit," said Spears, "fur goin' on thirty year an' better, an' I'll swar ter Heaven thar ain't nare sign of a letter thar."

Pardee stared at him in wild-eyed amazement for a moment. Then, flinging the deer from his shoulder to the ground, he knelt beside the great rock, and guiding his ramrod over the surface, he exclaimed, "Hyar, Spears; right hyar!"

The blacksmith was all incredulous as he lent himself to a new posture, and leaned forward to look with the languid indulgence of one who will not again entertain doubt.

"Nare A, nor B, nor C, nor none o' the fambly," he declared. "These hyar rocks ain't no Moses' tables sure enough; Moses never war in Tennessee. They be jes like enny other rock, an' thar ain't a word o' writin' on' em."

He looked up with a curious questioning at Pardee's face—a strange face for a man detected in a falsehood, a trick. His deep-set eyes were wide as if straining for perception denied them. Despite the chill rare air, great drops had started on his brow, and were falling upon his beard, upon his hands—his long sinewy strong hands that had once seized a panther by the throat in a close encounter, when his weapons failed him, and had throttled the savage thing by the sheer force of his grip. These strong hands were quivering; they hovered above the signs on the rocks. The mystic letters, the inspired words, where were they? Grope as he might, he could not find them. Alas! doubt and denial had climbed the mountain—the awful limitations of the more finite human creature—and his inspiration and the finer enthusiasms of the truth were dead.

Dead with a throe that was almost like a literal death. This—on this he had lived; the ether of ecstasy was the breath of his life. He clutched at the stained red handkerchief knotted about his throat as if he were suffocating; he tore it open as he swayed backward on his knees. He did not hear—or he did not heed—the laugh among the little crowd on the bald—satirical, rallying, zestful. He was deaf to the strains of the violin, jeeringly and jerkingly playing a foolish tune. It was growing fainter, for they had all turned about to betake themselves once more to the world below. He could have seen, had he cared to see, their bearded grinning faces peering through the stunted trees, as descending they came near the spot where he had lavished the spiritual graces of his feeling, his enthusiasm, his devotion, his earnest reaching for something higher, for something holy, which had refreshed his famished soul; had given to its dumbness words; had erased the values of the years, of the nations; had made him friends with Moses on the "bald"; had revealed to him the finger of the Lord on the stone.

He took no heed of his gestures, of which, indeed, he was unconscious. They were fine dramatically, and of great power, as he alternately rose to his full height, beating his breast in despair, and once more sank upon his knees, with a pondering brow and a searching eye, and a hovering, trembling hand, striving to find the clew he had lost. They might have impressed a more appreciative audience, but not one more entertained than the cluster of men who looked and paused and leered in amusement at one another, and thrust out satirical tongues. Long after they had disappeared, the strains of the violin could be heard, filling the solemn, stricken, strangely stunted woods with a grotesquely merry presence, hilarious and jeering.

Pardee found it possible to survive the destruction of illusions. Most of us do. It wrought in him, however, the saturnine changes natural upon the relinquishment of a dear and dead fantasy. This ethereal entity is a more essential component of happiness than one might imagine from the extreme tenuity of the conditions of its existence. It may have been a poor thing, but although we can calmly enough close its eyes, and straighten its limbs, and bury it decently from out the offended view of fact, we mourn it in our hearts as long as life lasts. And we are bereaved.

There is a certain stage in every sorrow when it rejects sympathy. Pardee, always taciturn, grave, uncommunicative, was invested with an austere aloofness, and was hardly to be approached as he sat, silent and absent, brooding over the fire at his own home. When roused by some circumstance of the domestic routine, and it became apparent that his mood was not sullenness nor anger, but simple and complete introversion, it added a dignity and suggested a remoteness that were yet less reassuring. His son, who stood in awe of him—not because of paternal severity, but because no boy could refrain from a worshipping respect for so miraculous a shot, a woodsman so subtly equipped with all elusive sylvan instincts and knowledge—forbore to break upon his meditations by the delivery of Grinnell's message. Nevertheless the consciousness of withholding it weighed heavily upon him. He only pretermitted it for a time, until a more receptive state of mind should warrant it. Day by day, however, he looked with eagerness when he came into the cabin in the evening to see if his father were still seated in the chimney-corner silently smoking pipe after pipe. Pardee had seldom remained at home so long at a time, and the boy had a daily fear that the gun on the primitive rack of deer antlers would be missing, and word left in the family that he had taken the trail up the mountain, and would return "'cordin' ter luck with the varmints." And thus Job Grinnell's enigmatical message, that had the ring of defiance, might remain indefinitely postponed.

He had not realized how long a time it had been delayed, until one evening at the wood-pile, in tossing off a great stick to hew into lengths for the chimney-place, he noticed that thin ice had formed in the moss and lichens and the dank cool shadows of the interstices. "I tell ye now, winter air a-comin'," he observed. He stood leaning on his axe-handle and looking down upon the scene so far below; for Pardee's house was perched half-way up on the mountain-side, and he could see over the world how it fared as the sun went down. A brown world it was, but far away upon the levels of the valley of East Tennessee a golden haze glittered resplendent, lying close upon an irradiated earth, and ever brightening toward the horizon, and it seemed as if the sun in sinking might hope to fall in fairer spheres than the skies he had left, for they were of a dun-color and an opaque consistency. Only one horizontal rift gave glimpses of a dazzling ochreous tint of indescribable brilliancy, from the focus of which the divergent light was shed upon the western limits of the land. Chilhowee, near at hand, was dark enough—a purplish garnet hue; the scarlet of the sour-wood gleamed in the cove; the hickory still flared gallantly yellow; the receding ranges to the north and south were blue and more faintly azure. The little log cabin stood with small fields about it, for Pardee barely subsisted on the fruits of the soil, and did not seek to profit. It had only one room, with a loft above; the barn was a makeshift of poles, badly chinked, and showing through the crevices what store there was of corn and pumpkins. A black and white work-ox, that had evidently no deficiency of ribs, stood without the fence and gazed, a forlorn Tantalus, at these unattainable dainties; now and then a muttered low escaped his lips as he resorted once more to his cud. Nobody noticed him or sympathized with him, except perhaps the little girl, who had come out in her sun-bonnet to help her brother bring in the fuel. He gruffly accepted her company, a little ashamed of her because she was a girl; since, however, there was no other boy by to see, he permitted her the delusion that she was of assistance.

As he paused to rest he reiterated, "Winter air a-comin', I tell ye."

"D'ye reckon, Ab," she asked, in her high thin little voice, her hands full of chips and the basket at her feet, "ez Grinnell's baby knows Chris'mus air a-comin'?"

He glowered at her as he leaned on the axe. "I reckon Grinnell's old baby dunno B from Bull-foot," he declared, gruffly.

The recollection of the message came over him. He had a pang of regret, remembering all the old grudges against the Grinnells. They were re-enforced by this irrepressible yearning after their baby, this admission that they had aught which was not essentially despicable. Nevertheless, he suddenly saw a reason for the Grinnell baby's existence; he loaded up both arms with the sticks of wood, and, followed by the peripatetic sun-bonnet, conscientiously weighed down with one billet, he strode into the house, and let his burden fall with a mighty clatter in the corner of the chimney. The sun-bonnet staggered up and threw her stick on the top of the pile of wood.

Pardee, sitting silently smoking, glanced up at the noise. Abner took advantage of the momentary notice to claim, too, the attention of his mother. "I wish ye'd make Eunice quit talkin' 'bout the Grinnells' old baby, like she war actially demented—uglies' bald-headed, slab-sided, slobbery old baby I ever see—nare tooth in its head! I do despise them Grinnells."

As he anticipated, his father spoke suddenly: "Ye jes keep away from thar," he said, sternly. "I trest them folks no furder'n a rattlesnake."

"*I* ain't consortin' along o' 'em," declared the boy. "But I actially hed ter take Eunice by the scalp o' her head an' lug her off one day when she hung on thar fence a-stare-gazin' Grinnell's baby like 'twar fitten ter eat."

The child's mother, a cadaverous, pale woman, was listlessly stringing the warping-bars with hanks of variegated yarn. Her own mother, who conserved a much more active and youthful interest in life, took down a brown gourd that was on a protruding lath of the clay and stick chimney, and hunted among the scraps of homespun and bits of yarn stowed within. The room was much like the gourd in its aged brown tint; its indigenous aspect, as if it were not made with hands, but was some spontaneous production of the soil; its bits of bright color—the peppers hanging from the rafters, the rainbow-hued yarn festooning the warping-bars, the red coals of the fire, the blue and yellow ware ranged on the shelf, the brown puncheon floor and walls and ceiling and chimney—it might have seemed the interior of a gigantic gourd. She dressed a twig from the pile of wood in a gay scrap of cloth, casting glances the while at the little girl, and handed it to her.

"I hain't never seen ez good a baby ez this," she said, with the convincing coercive mendacity of a grandmother.

The little girl accepted it humbly; it was a good baby doubtless of its sort, but it was not alive, which could not be denied of the Grinnell baby, Grinnell though it was.

"An' Job Grinnell he kem down ter the fence, an' 'lowed he'd slit our ears, an' named us shoats," continued her brother. Pardee lifted his head. "An' sent a word ter dad," said the boy, tremulously.

"What word did he send ter—*me?*" cried Pardee.

The boy quailed to tell him. "He tole me ter ax ye ef ye ever read sech ez this on Moses' tables in the mountings—'An' ye shell claim sech ez be yer own, an' yer neighbors' belongings shell ye in no wise boastfully medjure fur yourn, nor look upon it fur covetiousness, nor yit git a big name up in the kentry fur ownin' sech ez be another's,'" faltered the sturdy Abner.

The next moment he felt an infinite relief. He suddenly recognized that he had been chiefly restrained from repeating the words by an unrealized terror lest they prove true—lest something his father claimed was not his, indeed.

But the expression of anger on Pardee's face was merged first in blank astonishment, then in perplexed cogitation, then in renewed and overpowering amazement.

The wife turned from the warping-bars with a vague stare of surprise, one hand poised uncertainly upon a peg of the frame, the other holding a hank of "spun truck." The grandmother looked over her spectacles with eyes sharp enough to seem subsidized to see through the mystery.

"In the name o' reason and religion, Roger Pardee," she adjured him, "what air that thar perverted Philistine talkin' 'bout?"

"It air more'n I kin jedge of," said Pardee, still vainly cogitating.

He sat for a time silent, his dark eyes bent on the fire, his broad high forehead covered by his hat pulled down over it, his long tangled dark locks hanging on his collar.

Suddenly he rose, took down his gun, and started toward the door.

"Roger," cried his wife, shrilly, "I'd leave the critter be. Lord knows thar's been enough blood spilt an' good shelter burned along o' them Pardees' an' Grinnells' quar'ls in times gone. Laws-a-massy!"—she wrung her hands, all hampered though they were in the "spun truck"—"I'd ruther be a sheep 'thout a soul, an' live in peace."

"A sca'ce ch'ice," commented her mother. "Sheep's got ter be butchered. I'd ruther be the butcher, myself—healthier."

Pardee was gone. He had glanced absently at his wife as if he hardly heard. He waited till she paused; then, without answer, he stepped hastily out of the door and walked away.

The cronies at the blacksmith's shop latterly gathered within the great flaring door, for the frost lay on the dead leaves without, the stars scintillated with chill suggestions, and the wind was abroad on nights like these. On shrill pipes it played; so weird, so wild, so prophetic were its tones that it found only a shrinking in the heart of him whose ear it constrained to listen. The sound of the torrent far below was accelerated to an agitated, tumultuous plaint, all unknown when its pulses were bated by summer languors. The moon was in the turmoil of the clouds, which, routed in some wild combat with the winds, were streaming westward.

And although the rigors of the winter were in abeyance, and the lilac Christmas-flower bloomed in the grass at the door, the forge fire, flaring or dully glowing, overhung with its dusky hood, was a friendly thing to see, and in its vague illumination the rude interior of the shanty—the dirt floor, the implements of the trade, the bearded faces grouped about, the shadowy figures seated on whatever might serve, a block of wood, the shoeing-stool, a plough, or perched on the anvil—became visible to Roger Pardee from far down the road as he approached. Even the head of a horse could be seen thrust in at the window, while the brute, hitched outside, beguiled the dreary waiting by watching with a luminous, intelligent eye the gossips within, as if he understood the drawling colloquy. They were suffering some dearth of timely topics, supplying the deficiency with reminiscences more or less stale, and had expected no such sensation as they experienced when a long shadow fell athwart the doorway: the broad aperture glimmering a silvery gray contrasted with the brown duskiness of the interior and the purple darkness of the distance; the forge fire showed Pardee's tall figure leaning on the door-frame, and lighted up his serious face beneath his great broad-brimmed hat, his intent, earnest eyes, his tangled black beard and locks, and his blue jeans coat. He gave no greeting, and silence fell upon them as his searching gaze scanned them one by one.

"Whar's Job Grinnell?" he demanded, abruptly.

There was a shuffling of feet, as if those members most experienced relief from the constraint that silence had imposed upon the party. A vibration from the violin—a sigh as if the instrument were suddenly moved rather than a touch upon the strings—intimated that the young musician was astir. But it was Spears, the blacksmith, who spoke.

"Kem in, Roger," he called out, cordially, as he rose, his massive figure and his sleek head showing in the dull red light on the opposite side of the forge, his bare arms folded across his chest. "Naw, Job ain't hyar; hain't been hyar for a right smart while."

There was a suggestion of disappointment in the attitude of the motionless figure at the door. The deeply earnest, pondering face, visible albeit the red light from the forge was so dull, was keenly watched. For the inquiry was fraught with peculiar meaning to those cognizant of the long and bitter feud.

"I ax," said Pardee, presently, "kase Grinnell sent me a mighty cur'ous word the t'other day." He lifted his head. "Hev enny o' you-uns hearn him 'low lately ez I claim ennything ez ain't mine?"

There was silence for a moment. Then the forge was suddenly throbbing with the zigzagging of the bow of the violin jauntily dandering along the strings. His keen sensibility apprehended the sudden jocosity as a jeer, but before he could say aught the blacksmith had undertaken to reply.

"Waal, Pardee, ef ye hedn't axed me, I warn't layin' off ter say nuthin 'bout'n it. 'Tain't no consarn o' mine ez I knows on. But sence ye *hev* axed me, I hold my jaw fur the fear o' no man. The words ain't writ ez I be feared ter pernounce. An' ez all the kentry hev hearn 'bout'n it 'ceptin' you-uns, I dunno ez I hev enny call ter hold my jaw. The Lord 'ain't set no seal on my lips ez I knows on."

"Naw, sir!" said Pardee, his great eyes glooming through the dusk and flashing with impatience, "He 'ain't set no seal on yer lips, ter jedge by the way ye wallop yer tongue about inside o' 'em with fool words. Whyn't ye bite off what ye air tryin' ter chaw?"

"Waal, then," said the admonished orator, bluntly, "Grinnell 'lows ye don't own that thar lan' a-nigh them rocks on the bald, no more'n ye read enny writin' on 'em."

"Not them rocks!" cried Pardee, standing suddenly erect—"the tables o' the Law, writ with the finger o' the Lord—an' Moses flung 'em down thar an bruk 'em. All the kentry knows they air Moses' tables. An' the groun' whar they lie air mine."

"Tain't; Grinnell say 'tain't."

"Naw, sir," chimed in the young musician, his violin silent. "Job Grinnell declars he owns it hisself, an' ef he war willin' ter stan' the expense he'd set up his rights, but the lan' ain't wuth it. He 'lows his line runs spang over them, an' a heap furder."

Pardee was silent; one or two laughed jeeringly; he had been proved a liar once. It was well that he did not deny; he was put to open shame among them.

"An' Grinnell say," continued Blinks, "ez ye hev gone an' tole big tales 'mongst the brethren fur ownin' sech ez ain't yourn, an' readin' of s'prisin' sayin's on the rocks."

He bent his head to a series of laughing harmonics, and when he raised it, hearing no retort, the silvery gray square of the door was empty. He saw the moon glimmer on the clumps of grass where the Christmas-flower bloomed.

The group sat staring in amaze; the blacksmith strode to the door and looked out, himself a massive dark outline upon the shimmering neutrality of the background. There was no figure in sight, no faint foot-fall audible, no rustle of the sere leaves; only

the voice of the mountain torrent, far below, challenged the stillness with its insistent cry.

He looked back for a moment, with a vague strange doubt if he had seen aught, heard aught, in the scene just past. "Hain't Pardee been hyar?" he asked, passing his hand across his eyes. The sense of having dreamed was so strong upon him that he stretched his arms and yawned.

The gleaming teeth of the grouped shadows demonstrated the merriment evoked by the query. The chuckle was arrested midway.

"Ye 'pear ter 'low ez suthin' hev happened ter Pardee, an' that thar war his harnt," suggested one.

The bold young musician laid down his violin suddenly. The instrument struck upon a keg of nails, and gave out an abrupt discordant jangle, startling to the nerves. "Shet up, ye durned squeech-owl!" he exclaimed, irritably. Then, lowering his voice, he asked: "Didn't they 'low down yander in the Cove ez Widder Peden, the day her old man war killed by the landslide up in the mounting, hear a hoe a-scrapin' mightily on the gravel in the gyarden-spot, an' went ter the do', an' seen him thar a-workin', an' axed him when he kem home? An' he never lifted his head, but hoed on. An' she went down thar 'mongst the corn, an' she couldn't find nobody. An' jes then the Johns boys rid up an' 'lowed ez Jim Peden war dead, an' hed been fund in the mounting, an' they war a-fetchin' of him then."

The horse's head within the window nodded violently among the shadows, and the stones rolled beneath his forefoot as he pawed the ground.

"Mis' Peden she knowed suthin' were a-goin' ter happen when she seen that harnt a-hoein'."

"I reckon she did," said the blacksmith, stretching himself, his nerves still under the delusion of recent awakening. "Jim never hoed none when he war alive. She mought hev knowed he war dead ef she seen him hoein'."

"Waal, sir," exclaimed the violinist, "I'm a-goin' up yander ter Pardee's ter-morrer evenin' ter find out what he died of, an' when."

That he was alive was proved the next day, to the astonishment of the smith and his friends. The forge was the voting-place of the district, and there, while the bellows were blowing, the fire flaring, the anvil ringing, the echoes vibrating, now loud, now faint, with the antiphonal chant of the hammer and the sledge, a notice was posted to give warning to the adjacent owners that Roger Pardee's land, held under an original grant from the State, would be processioned according to law some twenty days after date, and the boundaries thereof defined and established. The fac-simile of the notice, too, was posted on the court-house door in the county town twenty miles away, for there were those who journeyed so far to see it.

"I wonder," said the blacksmith, as he stood in the unfamiliar street and gazed at it, his big arms, usually bare, now hampered with his coat sleeves and folded upon his chest—"I wonder ef he footed it all the way ter town at the gait he tuk when he lit out from the forge?"

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It was a momentous day when the county surveyor planted his Jacob's-staff upon the State line on the slope of the bald. His sworn chain-bearers, stalwart young mountaineers clad in jeans, with broad-brimmed wool hats and tangled hair, their heavy boots drawn high over their trousers, stood ready and waiting, with the sticks and clanking chain, on the margin of the ice-cold spring gushing out on this bleak height, and signifying more than a fountain in the wilderness, since it served to define the northeast corner of Pardee's land. The two enemies were perceptibly conscious of each other. Grinnell's broad face and small eyes laden with fat lids were persistently averted. Pardee often looked toward him gloweringly, his head held, nevertheless, a little askance, as if he rejected the very sight. There was the fire of a desperate intention in his eyes. Looking at his face, shaded by his broad-brimmed hat, one could hardly have doubted now whether it expressed most ferocity or force. His breath came quick—the bated breath of a man who reserves and watches and waits for a supreme moment. His blue jeans coat was buttoned close about his sunburned throat, where the stained red handkerchief was knotted. He wore a belt with his powder-horn and bullet pouch, and carried his rifle on his shoulder; the hand that held it trembled, and he tried to quell the quiver. "I'll prove it fust, an' kill him arterward—kill him arterward," he muttered.

In the other hand he held a yellowed old paper. Now and then he bent his earnest dark eyes upon the grant, made many a year ago by the State of Tennessee to his grandfather; for there had been no mesne conveyances.

The blacksmith had come begirt with his leather apron, and with his hammer in his hand, an inopportune customer having jeopardized his chance of sharing in the sensation of the day. The other neighbors all wore their coats closely buttoned. Blinks had his violin hung upon his back; the sharp timbre of the wind, cutting through the leafless boughs of the stunted woods, had a kindred fibrous resonance. Clouds hung low far beneath them; here and there, as they looked, the trees on the slopes showed above and again below the masses of clinging vapors. Sometimes close at hand a peak would reveal itself, asserting the solemn vicinage of the place; then draw its veil slowly about it, and stand invisible and in austere silence. The surveyor, a stalwart figure with heavy boots, his trousers stuffed into them, his closely buttoned coat giving him a military aspect, looked disconsolately downward.

"I hoped I'd die before this," he remarked. "I'm equal to getting over anything in nature that's flat or oblique, but the vertical beats me."

He bent to take sight for a moment, the group silently watching him. Suddenly he came to the perpendicular, and strode off down the rugged slope over gullies and bowlders, through rills and briery tangles, his eye fixed and intent as if he were led into the sylvan depths by the lure of a vision. The chain-bearers followed, continually bending and rising, the series of genuflections resembling the fervors of some religious rite. The chain writhed in serpentine convolutions among the dead leaves that rustled sibilantly at every turn, and was ever and anon drawn out to its extremest length. Then the dull clank of the links was silent.

"Stick!" called out the young mountaineer in the rear.

"Stuck!" responded his comrade ahead.

And once more the writhing and jingling among the withered leaves; the surveyor strode on, turning his face neither to the right nor to the left, with his Jacob's-staff held upright before him.

The other men trooped along scatteringly, dodging under the low boughs of the stunted trees, and making wide detours to evade the obstacles over which the compass led the surveyor and his chain-bearers. They drew into a close squad when the great square stones—Moses' tables of the Law—came into view, lying where the man of God flung them upon the sere slope below, both splintered and fissured, and one broken in twain. The surveyor was bearing straight down upon them. The men running on either side could not determine whether the line would fall within the spot or just beyond. They broke into wild exclamations.

"Ye may hammer me out ez flat ez a skene," cried the blacksmith, "ef I don't b'lieve ez Pardee hev got 'em."

"Naw, sir, naw!" cried another fervent amateur; "that's the north. I jes now viewed Grinnell's dad's deed; the line undertakes ter run with Pardee's line; he hev got seven hunderd poles ter the north; ef they air a-goin' ter the north, them tables o' the Law air Grinnell's."

A wild chorus ensued.

"Naw!" "Yes!" "Thar they go!" "A-bearin' off that-a-way!" "Beats my time!" as they stumbled and scuttled alongside the acolytes of Mensuration, who bowed down and rose up at every length of the chain. Suddenly a cry from the chain-bearers.

"Out!"

Stillness ensued.

The surveyor stopped to mark the "out." It was a moment of thrilling suspense; the rocks lay only a few chains further; Grinnell, into whose confidence doubt had begun to be instilled, said to himself, all a-tremble, that he would hardly have staked his veracity, his standing with the brethren, if he had realized that it was so close a matter as this. He had known all his life that his father owned the greater part of the unproductive wilderness lying between the two ravines; the land was almost worthless by reason of its forests, its rocks, and the steep slants which rendered it utterly untillable. He was sure that by the terms of his deed, which his father had from its vender, Squire Bates, his line included the Moses' tables on which Pardee had built so fallacious a repute of holiness. He looked once more at the paper—"thence from Crystal Spring with Pardee's line north seven hundred poles to a stake in the middle of the river."

Pardee too was all a-quiver with eagerness. He had not seen those stones since that terrible day when all the fine values of his gifted vision had been withdrawn from him, and he could read no more with eyes blinded by the limitations of what other men could see—the infinitely petty purlieus of the average sense. He had a vague idea that should they say this was his land where those strange stones lay, he would see again, he would read undreamed words, writ with a pen of fire. He started toward them, and then with a conscious effort he held back.

The surveyor took no heed of the sentiments involved in processioning Pardee's land. He stood leaning on his Jacob's-staff, as interesting to him as Moses' stones, and infinitely more useful, and wiped his brow, and looked about, and yawned. To him it was merely the surveying for a foolish cause of a very impracticable and steep tract of land, and the only reason it should be countenanced by heaven or earth was the fees involved. And this was what he saw at the end of Pardee's line.

Suddenly he took up his Jacob's-staff and marched on with a long stride, bearing straight down upon the rocks. The whole cortege started anew—the genuflecting chain-bearers, the dodging, scrambling, running spectators. A buzzard wheeling in the air in its strong fine flight described its graceful circles now in the shadow, and now catching on its wings a gleam of sunshine that did not penetrate below. On one of the strange stunted leafless trees a colony of vagrant crows had perched, eerie enough to seem the denizens of those weird forests; they broke into raucous laughter—Haw! haw! haw!—rising to a wild commotion of harsh derisive discord as the men once more gave vent to loud, excited cries. For the surveyor, stalking ahead, had passed beyond the great tables of the Law; the chain-bearers, with their continual iteration of "Stick!" "Stuck!" were drawing Pardee's line on the other side of them, and they had fallen, if ever they fell here from Moses' hand and broke in twain, upon Pardee's land, granted to his ancestor by the State of Tennessee.

He could not speak for joy, for pride. His dark eyes were illumined by a glancing, amber light. He took off his hat and smoothed with his rough hand his long black hair, falling from his massive forehead. He leaned against one of the stunted oaks, shouldering his rifle that he had loaded for Grinnell—he could hardly believe this, although he remembered it. He did not want to shoot Grinnell; he would not waste the good lead!

And indeed Grinnell had much ado to defend himself against the sneers and rebukes with which the party beguiled the way through the wintry woods. "Ter go a-claimin' another man's land, an' put him ter the expense o' processionin' it, an' git his line run!" exclaimed the blacksmith, indignantly. "An' ye 'ain't got nare sign o' a show at Moses' tables!"

"I dunno how this hyar line air a-runnin'," declared Grinnell, sorely beset. "I don't b'lieve it air a-runnin' north."

The surveyor was hard by. He had planted his staff again, and was once more taking his bearings. He looked up for a second.

"North*west*," he said.

Grinnell stared for a moment; then strode up to the surveyor, and pointed with his stubby finger at a word on his deed.

The official looked with interest at it; he held up suddenly Pardee's grant and read aloud, "From Crystal Spring seven hundred poles north*west* to a stake in the middle of the river."

He examined, too, the original plat of survey which he had taken to guide him, and also the plat made when Squire Bates had sold to Grinnell's father; "north*west*" they all read. There was evidently a clerical error on the part of the scrivener who had transcribed Grinnell's deed.

In a moment the badgered man saw that through the processioning of Pardee's land he had lost heavily in the extent of his supposed possessions. He it was who had claimed what was rightfully another's. And because of the charge Pardee was the richer by a huge slice of the other's mountain land—how large he could not say, as he ruefully followed the line of survey.

But for this discovery the interest of processioning Pardee's land would have subsided with the determination of the ownership of the limited environment of the stone tables of the Law. Now, as they followed the ever-diverging line to the northwest, the group was pervaded by a subdued and tremulous excitement, in which even the surveyor shared. Two or three whispered apart now and then, and Grinnell, struggling to suppress his dismay, was keenly conscious of the glances that sought him again and again in the effort to judge how he was taking it. Only Pardee himself was withdrawn from the interest that swayed them all. He had loitered at first, dallying with a temptation to slip silently from the party and retrace his way to the tables and see, perchance, if some vestige of that mystic scripture might not reveal itself to him anew, or if it were indeed some morbid fancy, some futile influence of solitude, some fevered condition of the blood or the brain, that had traced on the stone those gracious words, the mere echo of which—his stuttered, vague recollections—had roused the camp-meeting to fervid enthusiasms undreamed of before. And then he put from him the project—some other time, perhaps, for doubts lurked in his heart, hesitation chilled his resolve—some other time, when they and their prosaic influence were all far away. He was roused abruptly, as he stalked in their midst, to the perception of the deepening excitement among them. They had emerged from the dense growths of the mountain to the lower slope, where pastures and fields—whence the grain had been harvested—and a garden and a dwelling, with barns and bin and fences, lay before them all. And as Pardee stopped and stared, the realization of a certain significant fact struck him so suddenly that it seemed to take his breath away. That divergent line stretching to the northwest had left within his boundaries the land on which his enemy had built his home.

He looked; then he smote his thigh and laughed aloud.

The rocks on the river-bank caught the sound, and echoed it again and again, till the air seemed full of derisive voices. Under their stings of jeering clamor, and under the anguish of the calamity which his reeling senses could scarcely measure, Job Grinnell's composure suddenly gave way. He threw up his arms and called upon Heaven; he turned and glared furiously at his enemy. Then, as Pardee's laughter still jarred the air, he drew a "shooting-iron" from his pocket. The blacksmith closed with him, struggling to disarm him. The weapon was discharged in the turmoil, the ball glancing away in the first quiver of sunshine that had reached the earth to-day, and falling spent across the river.

Grinnell wrested himself from the restraining grasp, and rushed down the slope to his gate to hide himself from the gaze of the world—his world, that little group. Then remembering that it was no longer his gate, he turned from it in an agony of loathing. And knowing that earth held no shelter for him but the sufferance of another man's roof, he plunged into the leafless woods as if he were heavily dragged himself by a power which warred within him with other strong motives, and disappeared among the myriads of holly bushes all aglow with their red berries.

The surveyor had planted his Jacob's-staff anew. The other men followed him, but Pardee lingered. He walked around the fence with a fierce, gloating eye, a panther-like, loping tread, as a beast might patrol a fold before he assails it. All of the venom of the old feud had risen to the opportunity. Here was his enemy at his mercy. He knew that it was less than seven years since the enclosures had been made, acres and acres of tillable land cleared, the houses built—all achieved which converted the worthlessness of a wilderness into the sterling values of a farm. No technicality of the law could save it. He—he, Roger Pardee—was a rich man for the "mountings," joining his little to this competence. All the cruelties, all the insults, all the traditions of the old vendetta came thronging into his mind, as distinctly presented as if they were a series of hideous pictures, for he was not used to think in detail, but in the full portrayal of scenes. The Pardee wrongs were all avenged. This result was so complete, so baffling, so ruinous temporally, so humiliating spiritually! It was the fullest replication of revenge for all that had challenged it.

"How Uncle Nehemiah would hev rej'iced ter hev lived ter see this day!" he thought, with a pious regret that the dead might not know.

The next moment his attention was suddenly attracted by a movement in the door-yard. A woman had been hanging out clothes to dry, and she turned to go in, without seeing the striding figure patrolling the enclosure. A baby—a small bundle of a red dress—was seated on the pile of sorghum-cane where the mill had ground in the autumn, the stalks were broken, and flimsy with frost and decay, and washed by the rains to a pallid hue, yet more marked in contrast with the brown ground. The baby's dress made a bright bit of color amidst the dreary tones. As Pardee caught sight of it he remembered that this was "Grinnell's old baby," who had been the cause of the renewal of the ancient quarrel, which had resulted so benignantly for him. "I owe you a good turn, sis," he murmured, satirically, glaring at the child as the unconscious mother lifted her to go in the house. The baby, looking over the maternal shoulder, encountered the stern eyes staring at her. She stared gravely too. Then with a bounce and a gurgle she beamed upon him from out the retirement of her flapping sun-bonnet; she smiled radiantly, and finally laughed outright, and waved her hands and again bounced beguilingly, and thus toothlessly coquetting, disappeared within the door.

Before Pardee reached home, flakes of snow, the first of the season, were whirling through the gray dusk noiselessly, ceaselessly, always falling, yet never seeming to fall, rather to restlessly pervade the air with a vacillating alienation from all the laws of gravitation. Elusive fascinations of thought were liberated with the shining crystalline aerial pulsation; some mysterious attraction dwelt down long vistas amongst the bare trees, their fine fibrous grace of branch and twig accented by the snow, which lay upon them with exquisite lightness, despite the aggregated bulk, not the densely packed effect which the boughs would show tomorrow. The crags were crowned; their grim faces looked frowningly out like a warrior's from beneath a wreath. Nowhere could the brown ground be seen; already the pine boughs bent, the needles failing to pierce the drifts. On the banks of the stream, on the slopes of the mountain, in wildest jungles, in the niches and crevices of bare cliffs, the holly glowed red in the midst of its green snow-laden leaves and ice-barbed twigs. When his house at last came into view, the roof was already deeply covered; the dizzying whirl had followed every line of the rail-fence; scurrying away along the furthest zigzags there was a vanishing glimpse of a squirrel; the boles of the trees were embedded in drifts; the chickens had gone to roost; the sheep were huddling in the broad door of the rude stable; he saw their heads lifted against the dark background within, where the ox was vaguely glimpsed. He caught their mild glance despite the snow that instarred with its ever-shifting crystals the dark space of the aperture, and intervened as a veil. They it was which suddenly reminded him of the season—that it was Christmas Eve; of the sheep which so many years ago beheld the angel of the Lord and the glory of the great light that shone about the shepherds abiding in the fields. Did they follow, he wondered, the shepherds who went to seek for Christ? Ah, as he paused meditatively beside the rail-fence—what matter how long ago it was, how far away!—he saw those sheep lying about the fields under the vast midnight sky. They lift their sleepy heads. Dawn? not yet, surely; and they lay them down again. And one must bleat aloud, turning to see the quickening sky; and one, woolly, white, white as snow, with eyes illumined by the heralding heavens, struggles to its feet, and another, and the flock is astir; and the shepherds, drowsing doubtless, are awakened to good tidings of great joy.

What a night that was!—this night—Christmas Eve. He wondered he had not thought of it before. And the light still shines, and the angel waits, and the eternal hosts proclaim peace on earth, good-will toward men, and summon us all to go and follow the shepherds and see—what? A humble little child cradled in a manger. The mountaineer, leaning on his gun by the rail-fence, looked through the driving snow with the lights of divination kindling in his eyes; seeing it all, feeling its meaning as never before; Christ came thus, he knew, for a purpose. He could have come in the chariots of the sun or on the wings of the wind. But He was cradled as a little child, that men might revere humanity for the sake of Him who had graced it; that they, thinking on Him, might be good to one another and to all little children.

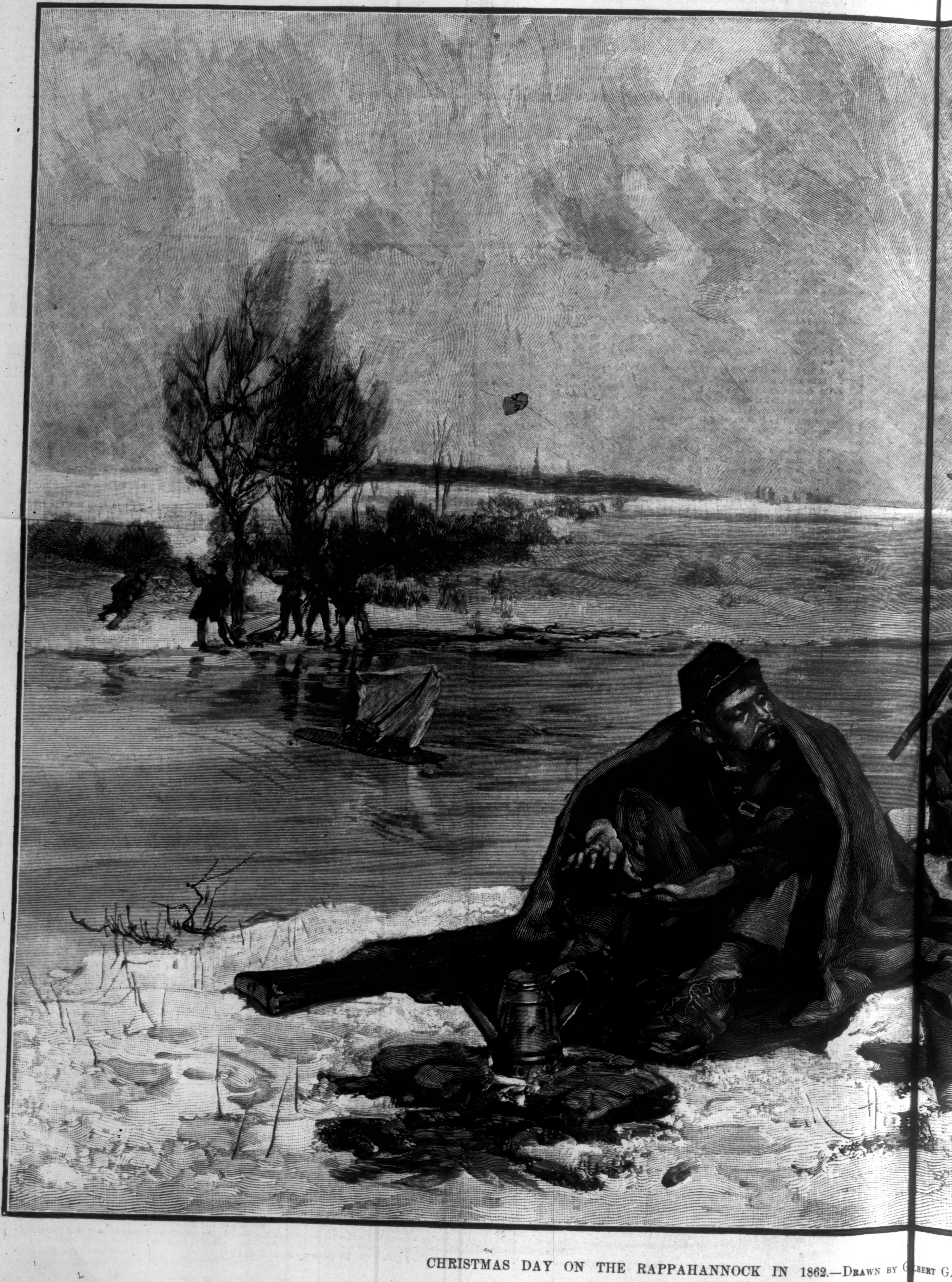
As he burst into the door of his house the elations of his high religious mood were rudely dispelled by shrill cries of gratulation from his wife and her mother. For the news had preceded him. Ephraim Blinks with his fiddle had stopped there on his way to play at some neighboring merry-making, and had acquainted them with the result of processioning Pardee's land.

"We'll go down thar an' live!" cried his wife, with a gush of tears. "Arter all our scratchin' along like ten-toed chickens all this time, we'll hev comfort an' plenty! We'll live in Grinnell's good house! But ter think o' our trials, an' how pore we hev been!"

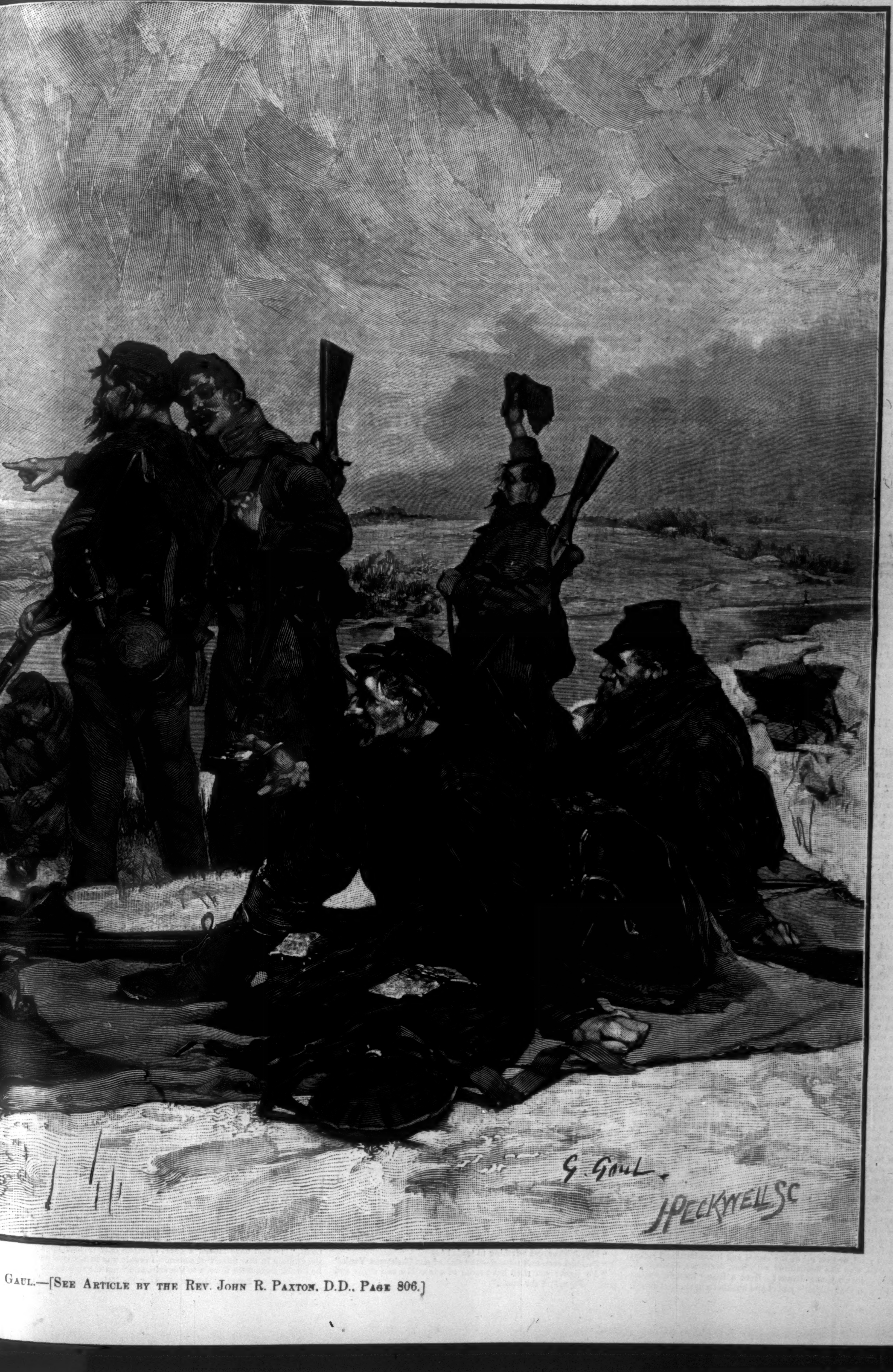
"This air the Pardees' day!" cried the grandmother, her face flushed with the semblance of youth. "Arter all ez hev kem an' gone, the jedgmint o' the Lord hev descended on Grinnell, an' he air cast out. An' his fields, an' house, an' bin, an' barn, air Pardee's!"

The fire flared and faded; shadows of the night gloomed thick in the room—this night of nights that bestowed so much, that imposed so much on man and on his fellow-man!

[*Continued on page 806.*]



CHRISTMAS DAY ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK IN 1862.—DRAWN BY G[illegible] G




GAUL.—[SEE ARTICLE BY THE REV. JOHN R. PAXTON, D.D., PAGE 806.]

## PROCESSIONING PARDEE'S LAND.

[*Continued from page 803.*]

"Ain't the Grinnell baby got *no* home?" whimpered the hereditary enemy.

The mountaineer remembered the Lord of heaven and earth cradled, a humble Child, in the manger. He remembered, too, the humble child smiling its guileless good-will at the fence. He broke out suddenly.

"How kem the fields Pardee's," he cried, leaning his back against the door and striking the puncheon floor with the butt of the gun till it rang again and again, "or the house, or the bin, or the barn? Did he plant 'em? Did he build 'em? Who made 'em hisn?"

"The law!" exclaimed both women in a breath.

"Thar ain't no law in heaven or yearth ez kin gin an honest man what ain't hisn by rights," he declared.

An insistent feminine clamor arose, protesting the sovereign power of the law. Having logic and reason on their side as well, he quaked for a moment; then, dominant though he was in his own house, he yielded; he could not face them, but he could flee, He suddenly stepped out of the door, and when they opened it and looked after him in the snowy dusk and the whitened woods, he was gone.

And popular opinion coincided with them when it became known that he had formally relinquished his right to that portion of the land improved by Grinnell. He said to the old squire who drew up the quit-claim deed, which he executed that Christmas Eve, that while he was not willing to profit by his enemy's mistake, he was not willing to lose by it, and thus the consideration expressed in the conveyance was the value of the land, considered not as a farm, but as so many acres of wilderness before an axe was laid to the trunk of a tree or the soil upturned by a plough. It was the minimum of value, and Grinnell came cheaply off.

The blacksmith, the mountain fiddler, and the advanced thinker, who had been active in the survey, balked of the expected excitement attendant upon the ousting of Grinnell, and some sensational culmination of the ancient feud, were not in sympathy with the pacific result, and spoke as if they had given themselves to unrequited labors.

"Thar ain't no way o' settlin' what that thar critter Pardee owns 'ceptin' ez consarns Moses' tables o' the Law. He clings ter them," they said, in conclave about the forge fire when the big doors were closed and the snow, banking up the crevices, kept out the wind. "There ain't no use in percessionin' Pardee's land."

And indeed Pardee's possessions were wider far than even that divergent line which the county surveyor ran out might seem to warrant; for on the mountain-tops largest realms of solemn thought were open to him. He levied tribute upon the liberties of an enthused imagination. He exulted in the freedom of the expanding spaces of a spiritual perception of the spiritual things. When the snow slipped away from the tables of the Law, the man who had read strange scripture engraven thereon took his way one day, doubtful, but faltering with hope, up and up to the vast dome of the mountain, and knelt beside the rocks to see if perchance he might trace anew those mystic runes which he once had some fine instinct to decipher. And as he pondered long he found, or thought he found, here a familiar character, and there a slowly developing word, and anon—did he see it aright?—a phrase; and suddenly it was discovered to him that, whether their origin were a sacred mystery or the fantastic scroll-work of time as the rock weathered, high thoughts, evoking thrilling emotions, bear scant import to one who apprehends only in mental acceptance. And it was revealed to him that the law of the Lord is most fittingly interpreted through obedience to the noblest impulses of the heart, and that the multiform texts that he had read in the fine and curious script were but paraphrases of the simple mandate—an epitome of all worship, all faith, all morality—to be good to one another, and, for the sake of that humble cradle, to all little children.

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## ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK, CHRISTMAS DAY, 1862.

### BY JOHN R. PAXTON, PRIVATE, COMPANY G, 140TH PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS.

I WONDER which man God will give the preference to—to the Joab who treacherously slew Abner, or to the Joab who chivalrously risked his life to get his parched king a cup of water from a well in the camp of the enemy? I do wonder which man in every one of us God will favor. There was my old comrade Sergeant Nelson, who had gathered somewhat of evil in the army, whose Christian virtues were not highly polished, and who, on occasion, dropped into profanity as Wegg did into poetry. Now I wonder which Nelson God will keep, and which Nelson He will throw away—the rough soldier, or the man at Cold Harbor who said, "Boys, do you hear Bebout and Stone calling our names and begging for water?" We left them at the foot of the hill, wounded, that afternoon, when we charged and were repulsed. "Boys, it's mighty risky. There is no truce to-night, and them rebs shoot about as fine by starlight as by day. But I'm going out to them. You see, if you and I were lying over there with a hole through us, and we called for water, and no one come, *though you heard us*, we would curse you all. Who will go with me?" "I, sergeant." "And I." They went, and two of them were killed. I wonder which Nelson God will keep, which throw away—the Nelson who was no saint, or the Nelson who died for man, like Jesus Christ.

I wonder which man is *me*, and which will come to the front and be on top at Judgment: this *me* in the study here, with an open Bible before him, who flatly contradicts the other *me*, who shivered with cold on the Rappahannock twenty-four years ago; this *me* who carries a shepherd's crook, who visits elderly and ailing sisters, who helps pious women pack boxes of cast-off clothing for needy and seedy missionaries; this *me* who is so inoffensive, so mild-mannered, turning *both cheeks* to the rich men who patronize and criticise him, and to the sisters who censure him for levity, or for lukewarmness on foreign missions, or for neglect in not visiting poor Mrs. Ailing, who magnanimously and uninterruptedly, for a whole hour, shares all her ills and aches and troubles with him, but never shares her cakes, or courage, or faith, or health, or money. God reward them!—those pious souls who ring my door-bell twenty times a day to share their adversity with me, but who never ring me up to share their prosperity. They keep all *that* to themselves.

It is such a funny world! You and I load our friends down with our aches and misfortunes and troubles, but when a rich old uncle dies and leaves us half a million, we do not load *that* on them. Oh no. But here am I preaching, so strong is habit. Yet which is *me*—this gentle, meek, apologetic clergyman, or that other *me* of a quarter of a century ago? that other *me* who wore that faded blue roundabout hanging on my study wall, with a lieutenant's shoulder-straps on it, who wore that sword and belt there before my eyes? Which is *me*—this man acquainted with meekness and piety and alms and grief, or that *me* of the sword and brass-buttoned jacket on the wall, who was acquainted with war, deviltries, death, reckless daring, love's young dream? Here a happy thought strikes me: to try on that soldier's jacket and buckle on again that sword. Alas! years and larger rations have outgrown that other *me*. The jacket won't go on; the sword, ah! the girth is greater—it won't buckle. What is this: a tear on Harper's paper? Yes, a tear for that other me who wore that jacket at Appomattox in the mad days of his youth, when his head never ached, nor his face had a wrinkle, nor his heart a sorrow. And what is this—a laugh? Yes—so close lie sobs and laughs—for as I took down my sword and drew it from its scabbard I recollected a story I often tell of a major-general in the army who was afterward a Governor of a State.

He was a very vain man, and one day in his Executive Chamber he said to his secretary, pointing to his sword on the wall, "Major, do you know that when that sword leaped from its scabbard and flashed in the sunlight, the war, sir, was virtually over—over, sir—decided. My sword did it." I recollected that, and laughed, and a tear and laugh trod on each other's heels. Such is life. We swing like a pendulum between pleasure and pain, hope and fear, laughs and tears—and they are never far apart. All things go in couples. Extremes meet every hour. Height and depth are correlatives; given one, you have the other. Can a man laugh loud? then turn him round, touch a different nerve, pronounce a woman's name, and lo! his sobs are as sincere and deep as his laughter.

So, my present *me*, cannot you ever stop preaching, and do a little practising? Sure it is that the tolerant God does not expect one man to do two things *very well*. Ordinarily it's enough to preach well, and leave others to practise. But here, now, my moralizing *me*, come out of the pulpit, and be a man among men. I am going to get into that jacket, so faded, so small for me now; I am going to buckle on that sword, if it does compel crowding, bad language, rebellion, pains, and being carried off the field swooning, as some ladies are betimes, because of the uproar and rage of the incommoded guests within. Well, it happened on this wise that I found myself shivering on the banks of the Rappahannock on Christmas Day, 1862, enlisted for three years or during the war, food for villanous saltpetre.

One day in June, 1862, our Professor of Mathematics remarked, as he closed the observatory: "Gentlemen, what Mars is up to in the sky doesn't concern us most just now, but to do our share of his work down in Virginia. The only exact science worth studying these times is not trigonometry, but to determine the shortest line to Richmond; and the most pressing duty of the hour is not to prove right angles equal, but to draw a steady aim through rifle sights at a rebel in arms, and to prove to all the world that the American Union can, must, and shall be preserved. Gentlemen, the chair of the Professor of Mathematics is vacant in this college; permit me to introduce to you Captain Fraser." 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! and away we went and enlisted—to go to Richmond. It took us three years to get there. No wonder: there were so many Longstreets to make our way through; so many Hills to climb; so many Stonewalls to batter down; so many Pickets to clear out of the way. It was as hard a road to travel as the steep and stony one to heaven.

No preaching, sir! *Can't* you forget the shop? Don't you know you have squeezed yourself into that faded jacket, and are squirming, with a flushed face and short breaths, behind that sword-belt, which has caused a rebellion *in medias res?* I started for Richmond in July, 1862, a lad eighteen years old, a Junior in college, and chafing to be at it—to double-quick it after John Brown's soul, which, since it did not require a knapsack, or three days' rations, or a canteen, or a halt during the night for sleep, was always marching on. On the night before Christmas, 1862, I was a dejected young patriot, wishing I hadn't done it, shivering in the open weather a mile back of the Rappahannock, on the reserve picket, and exposed to a *wet* snow-storm. There was not a stick of wood within five miles of us; all cut down, even the roots of trees dug up and burned. We lay down on our rubber blankets, pulled our woollen blankets over us, *spooned* it as close as we could get, to steal warmth from our comrades, and *tried not* to cry.

Next morning the snow lay heavy and deep, and the men, when I waked and looked about me, reminded me of a church grave-yard in winter. The snow covered us all, and my comrades seemed as if a small cemetery—just like a grave-yard and its mounds. "Fall in for picket duty! There, come, Moore, McManus, Paxton, Perrine, Pollock; fall in!" We fell in, of course. No breakfast; chilled to the marrow; snow a foot deep. We tightened our belts on our empty stomachs, seized our rifles, and marched to the river to take our six hours on duty.

It was Christmas Day, 1862. "And so this is war," my old *me* said to himself, while he paced in the wet snow his two hours on the river's brink. "And I am out here to shoot that lean, lank, coughing, cadaverous-looking butternut fellow over the river. So this *is war;* this is being a soldier; this is the genuine article; this is H. Greeley's 'On to Richmond.' Well, I wish he were only here in my place, running to keep warm; pounding his arms and breast to make the chilled blood circulate. So *this is war*, tramping up and down this river my fifty yards with wet feet, empty stomach, swollen nose."

Alas! when lying under the trees in the college campus last June, war meant to me martial music; gorgeous brigadiers in blue and gold; tall young men in line, shining in brass. War meant to me tumultuous memories of Bunker Hill, Cæsar's Tenth Legion, the charge of the Six Hundred—anything but this. Pshaw! I wish I were home. Let me see. Home? God's country. A tear?—yes, it is a tear. What are they doing at home? This is Christmas Day, 1862. Home? Well, stockings on the wall, candy, turkey, fun, merry Christmas, and the face of the girl I left behind. Another tear? Yes, I couldn't help it; I was only eighteen, and there was such a contrast between Christmas, 1862, on the Rappahannock, and other Christmases. Yes, there was a girl, too—such sweet eyes; such long lashes; such a low, tender voice! "Come, move quicker! Who goes there?" Shift the rifle from one aching shoulder to the other.

"Hello, Johnny; what are you up to?" The river was narrow, but deep and swift. It was a wet cold, not a freezing cold. There was no ice—too swift for that.

"Hello, Johnny, what you coughing so for?"

"Yank, with no overcoat, shoes full of holes, nothing to eat but parched corn and tobacco, and with this derned Yankee snow a foot deep, there is nothin' left, *nothin'* but to get up a cough by way of protestin' against this infernal ill treatment of the body. We-uns, Yank, all have a cough over here, and there's no sayin' which will run us to hole first, the cough or your bullets."

The snow still fell; the keen wind, raw and fierce, cut to the bone. It was God's worst weather, in God's forlornest, bleakest spot of ground, that Christmas Day of '62 on the Rappahannock, a half-mile below the town of Fredericksburg. But come, pick up your prostrate pluck, you shivering private. Surely there is enough dampness around without adding to it your tears.

"Let's laugh, boys."

"Hello, Johnny."

"Hello yourself, Yank."

"Merry Christmas, Johnny."

"Same to you, Yank."

"Say, Johnny, got anything to trade?"

"Parched corn and tobacco—the size of our Christmas, Yank."

"All right; you shall have some of our coffee and sugar and pork. Boys, find the boats."

Such boats! I see the children sailing them on the small lakes in our Central Park. Some Yankee, desperately hungry for tobacco, invented them for trading with the Johnnies. They were hid away under the banks of the river for successive relays of pickets.

We got out the boats. An old handkerchief answered for a sail. We loaded them with coffee, sugar, pork, and set the sail, and watched them slowly creep to the other shore. And the Johnnies? To see them crowd the bank, and push and scramble to be first to seize the boats, going into the water, and stretching out their long arms! Then when they pulled the boats ashore, and stood in a group over the cargo, and to hear their exclamations: "Hurrah for hog!" "Say, that's not roasted rye, but genuine coffee. Smell it, you-uns." "And sugar too." Then they divided the consignment. They laughed and shouted, "Reckon you-uns been good to we-uns this Christmas Day, Yanks." Then they put parched corn, tobacco, ripe persimmons, into the boats, and sent them back to us. And we chewed the parched corn, smoked real Virginia leaf, ate persimmons, which, if they weren't very filling, at least contracted our stomachs to the size of our Christmas dinner. And so the day passed. We shouted, "Merry Christmas, Johnny." They shouted, "Same to you, Yank." And we forgot the biting wind, the chilling cold; we forgot those men over there were our enemies, whom it might be our duty to shoot before evening.

We had bridged the river—spanned the bloody chasm. We were brothers, not foes, waving salutations of good-will in the name of the Babe of Bethlehem, on Christmas Day, in '62. At the very front of the opposing armies, the Christ Child struck a truce for us—broke down the wall of partition, became our peace. We exchanged gifts. We shouted greetings back and forth. We kept Christmas, and our hearts were lighter for it, and our shivering bodies were not quite so cold. Go thou and do likewise—push no poor debtor, prosecute no quarrel, bear no grudge, at Christmas-time; forgive your enemies, remember your mercies, and do not brood over your misfortunes at Christmas-time. If the times are hard, do not let the children know it, or Lazarus on your door-step become aware of it, at Christmas-time, to his deeper despair. Cannot you be cheerful and brave by your firesides, as we soldiers were on the Rappahannock on Christmas Day in '62, shouting good-wills to rebels on the opposite shore? Let us all shake hands on Christmas Day. Let us all touch elbows, and share with our neighbor who needs us most. Then make a truce with enemies, with care, with fears, with tears and sorrow, and let joy be unconfined on Christmas Day. Let justice soften into mercy. Let hate not harden into wrong, but be transformed into love. Let anger cease, let wrath be forgotten, let quarrels be reconciled.

Let Charity dispense bounty. Let the rich man love the poor. Let the lap of childhood be filled with plenty. Let all Rappahannocks of estrangement, separation, bitterness, unequal lots, opposing interests, be bridged by the Babe of Bethlehem on Christmas Day of '86. And "be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." There, I am preaching again, in a secular Journal of Civilization. Yet I can't help it. This Christ-born me has thrown off and left behind the other me, the old *me*, who followed Grant and Hancock to Richmond in the wild, mad days of his turbulent youth. I have taken off that faded blue jacket, and can stretch my arms; I have unbuckled that worn belt, and can breathe freely. Come, jacket; come, sword—hang again on the wall. You are my old me; but the present, real *me* is a man of peace and acquainted with grief; not so happy as a saint as he was as a soldier, but still trying to get his work in, since God didn't send for him at Gettysburg.

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## THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN.*

### BY WALTER BESANT,

AUTHOR OF "ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN," "THE CHAPLAIN OF THE FLEET," "SO THEY WERE MARRIED," ETC., ETC.

### CHAPTER XLI.

HOW THE "CALYPSO" CAME HOME AGAIN.

Lo! when we awoke in the morning, the *Calypso* herself was lying in the river, moored nearly opposite to the mouth of the Dock.

I made haste to the King's Yard, in order to hear the news, and there, as I expected, I found a little knot of gentlemen, including Captain Petherick, the chief officer of the Yard, and a few who, like myself, were brought thither by anxiety and curiosity. They were earnestly conversing with the First Lieutenant of the ship. He was a man whose hair was now grown completely gray (wherefore he no longer used powder), being some fifty-five years of age, but for want of interest never having got any higher. By birth he was a Scotchman; he had, like many of his countrymen, a hard and strongly marked face, and his manner of speech was hard and slow, so that though he had such a tale to tell as surely never was heard before, his manner of telling it never varied even in the most astonishing parts of his narrative, except that now and then he broke off to express his own opinion on the matter. We presently, however, discovered that he felt great commiseration for the unhappy fate of his Captain, young enough to be his son, and that he held much the same view as the towns-people, namely, that there must be witchcraft at the bottom of the affair. We learned also that the recapture of the ship would now present a very different complexion, being due, not as had been supposed, to a general rising of the crew, but to the most astonishing courage of the Captain himself, and the display of reckless daring in a single-handed attack upon the prize crew such as one had never read of or heard of before.

As regards the striking of the colors, there was nothing new in what we learned. The Captain with his own hand did certainly haul down the flag without firing a shot. Against that damning and capital fact nothing could be said. But as for what followed, you shall hear the First Lieutenant's story.

"When the Captain struck his colors, which he did with his own hand, the men looking on in sheer amazement, I myself ran to him, crying, 'For God's sake, Captain! for God's sake, sir, consider what you do!' But the Captain drew his hanger and slashed at me, so that, though the flat of the sword only struck me, I fell senseless. Then, as I have since been told, those officers whose place was on deck stood back, terrified by the wild looks and furious gestures of the Captain. So great was the authority which he possessed that not a man among them all dared so much as to murmur. Then the Frenchmen boarded us, and all except the Captain, who was suffered to remain on deck, and myself because I was senseless, were bundled below, and the hatches clapped down. When I presently recovered, I too was allowed to remain above. Now for two nights and two days the Captain sat on the quarter-deck, upon the trunnion of a carronade, his hat off, his hands upon his knees, his eyes blood-red, his face pale. Gentlemen," cried the First Lieutenant, breaking off suddenly at this point, "'Twould have moved a heart of stone only to look upon the Captain in this misery of shame. Despair was in his eyes as he turned them from the sea to the ship, and from the ship to the

* Begun in HARPER'S WEEKLY No. 1541.

sea. As for what the men think, there is but one opinion: that it was the work of the Devil. He was bewitched or possessed. I know not if we have the right to try a man for an act done under demoniac possession, which we know to be sometimes permitted. But the madness had now left him, and he was in his right mind again."

There was not one of those present who heard this with a dry eye. But more moving things still were to follow.

"It was on the third day after the surrender," the First Lieutenant told us, "and in the forenoon, the usual guard being set, the French officers and sailors all armed, and their Commander on the quarter-deck. In the waist was gathered together a small party of prisoners taking their spell of fresh air; they were lolling in the sun, or looking over the bulwarks in the hopes of discovering an English flag. Nothing was further from their thoughts than an attempt to recapture the *Calypso*. On that point there could be no doubt. They talked with each other in low voices, being very much dejected at the position of their affairs, and the prospect of a French prison, and they looked at their Captain, who sat bareheaded on the quarter-deck. He too, like themselves, was unarmed, and he sat without moving or making any sign of life.

"Suddenly he sprang to his feet, and caught the French officer, a much smaller man than himself, by the throat, tore his sword from him, and cut him down. The two sentinels rushed upon him with their bayonets, but he lightly leapt aside, and cut them down too. Then, armed with the sword, he sprang into the waist, and crying, 'Men of the *Calypso*, to the rescue of your ship!' he attacked the Frenchmen, cutting them down and driving all before him like a madman.

"There is a tall stout fellow aboard, one of our Marines. He was on deck at the time, and was the first who recovered presence of mind (the rest being clean taken aback by the suddenness of the thing). He seized a rammer, and sprang to the side of the Captain, fighting with him and protecting him. Mark you, if it had not been for that brave fellow the Captain would have been killed a dozen times over—as I doubt not he wished to be, seeing the reckless way in which he attacked the enemy. Nay, I wonder that in spite of this help he was not killed, seeing that they fired their pistols in his very face, and thrust at him with bayonets, and cut at him with swords; but all in vain. A fine sight it was, and such as will never be witnessed again by any of us, to see this hero fighting the whole of the prize crew single-handed save for the Marine, who seemed to have no other thought than to protect his Captain, and laid about him with his rammer as if it had been a quarter-staff.

"Well, gentlemen, you may be very sure that it was not very long before the rest of the English sailors on deck joined in with a true British cheer, fighting with whatever weapons they could pick up—namely, one with a marling-spike, one with a hammer, one with his fist, one with a dead Frenchman's bayonet, and so on—until in a few minutes we had the satisfaction of driving our conquerors under hatches, calling up our crew, and running up the Union-jack. The Captain it was who hauled it up with his own hand. His face was black with powder, and streaked with blood, though he had not received a scratch; his hands were red with blood, and his sword streaming; on the deck lay a dozen dead and wounded, though some of them only stunned with the Marine's rammer. When the flag was up, the Captain saluted it, and called on his men to give three cheers, which they did with a will. After that he ordered a double ration of rum, and every man to his duty.

"Then he turned to me. 'Mr. Macdonald,' he said, 'I would to God your Captain was lying dead among those poor wretches,' pointing to the slain. I told him to take courage, because it was by his act, and his alone, that the vessel was recaptured. Then he hesitated awhile, and fetched a sigh as if his heart was breaking.

"'Whose hand hauled down the flag?' he asked.

"I waited to hear what more he had to say.

"'Where is the man,' he asked, 'who fought beside me just now— I mean the man who interposed to save my life?'

"I called the man, who stepped forward and saluted.

"'So,' said the Captain, ''tis my old friend. Sirrah, twice hast thou endeavored to take my life, out of revenge. Once hast thou saved it. Thou hast thy revenge at last, and in full measure. Return to duty.'

"I know not, gentlemen," continued the First Lieutenant, "what the Captain meant by those words, for the man saluted and stepped back to his place, making no reply, either by look or speech. Then the Captain gave me his last orders. 'You will take the command of this ship, sir,' he said. 'You will enter in the Captain's log a full account of the circumstances connected with the surrender and the recapture of the *Calypso*. Disguise nothing, sir. Nothing must be omitted. Write that the Captain hauled down the flag. Write that the Captain cut down the First Lieutenant, who would have remonstrated. Write that there was not a single shot fired, and the enemy carried less weight of metal and a smaller crew.'

"'With respect, sir,' I told him, 'I shall also write that the Captain also retook the vessel single-handed.'

"'Write, further, that the Captain gave over the command to you, with instructions to take the ship to Spithead, the whereabouts of the Admiral not being known, there to report on what has happened, and to await the instructions of my Lords the Commissioners.'

"'Gentlemen,' the First Lieutenant concluded, 'I obeyed orders. I sailed to Spithead, and reported the circumstances of the case. The Commissioners have ordered me to bring the ship round to Deptford, the Captain aboard her, prisoner, waiting his court-martial. We hope that though he certainly struck the colors, his subsequent conduct may save his life. For most certainly he was mad when he did it, or bewitched, or possessed of a devil. But he is mad no longer. I forgot to say, gentlemen, that although for two days he refused to take anything, and I verily believe he intended to starve himself to death, he has since eaten and drunk heartily."

This was the story as the First Lieutenant told it.

Now when we heard it we were in a doubt what to do. For to neglect the unhappy prisoner altogether would seem heartless, whereas to try and see him, unless he manifested a desire to see us, would seem like intrusion. He sat in his cabin, we heard, all day, and at night, when it was dark, walked upon the quarter-deck. He spoke with no one save the First Lieutenant, and made no reference to the approaching trial, the day for which they expected would be fixed very shortly.

First, however, my father wrote to him, and asked if he would wish to see him; but received a letter, thanking him, indeed, and putting off his visit until, the writer said, he should be forced to contemplate the near approach of Death. Next, Mr. Brinjes sent a message that he wished to see him as his physician (a title which he assumed when he pleased); but the Captain returned word that he had never been in better health.

As for myself, I waited for some days, not venturing to intrude upon his suffering, yet desirous of seeing him. At last I wrote a letter, begging him to tell me if I could do anything for him. To which he replied that he would take it kindly if I would come aboard and see him in his cabin. I obeyed with a sinking heart, for, indeed, what consolation could I administer, or with what countenance could I greet him, or could I pretend that he was not overwhelmed with shame?

When I went on board I was astonished to find, acting as sentry at the top of the companion, no other than Aaron Fletcher. I knew not that he was on board the *Calypso*. Strange indeed that he should now be mounting guard as Marine over the man whom he had many times fought, and twice tried to murder. He made no sign of recognition as I passed him.

Jack was in his cabin, sitting at his window, leaning his head upon his hand and gazing upon the river, with the crowd of craft upon it. He turned his head when I opened the door, and rose to meet me.

"Luke," he said, "canst take the hand of a coward wretch who hath surrendered his ship without a blow? Nay, nay, lad; tears will not help, and I am not worth a tear, or anything now but to be shot like a cur, and rolled up in a bit of sacking, and so tossed into the water and forgotten."

I asked after his health, but he put me off.

"Health?" he cried. "What matters my health? If you can pick up a small-pox, or a galloping consumption, or a fever, and send it to me—the worse the complaint the better I shall like it; or if Mr. Brinjes, who can cause all diseases, will send me one that will suddenly tear out my heart or stop my breath, it would be very much to the point at the present juncture. My health? Why, as the Devil will have it, it was never better." He laughed. "Go tell Mr. Brinjes, or his swivel-eyed assistant, to make me up a disease or two in that saucepan of his that is always on the hob. 'Tis a crafty old man, and first cousin, I verily believe, to the Devil."

He paused awhile, thinking what next to tell me.

"Tell the Admiral— No, not yet; after my death thou shalt tell him all the truth, which I will tell thee directly. I cannot write to that good old man; yet, Luke, I must send him some message. Therefore— But no, there are no words that I can send him. I cannot ask his forgiveness, because he can never forgive me. I cannot thank him for all his kindness, because I am not worthy now so much as to send a word of gratitude. Let be—let be. When I am dead thou shalt tell him the truth. As for Castilla, she must forget me. Tell her that, Luke. I am certain that she will soon console herself. She never loved me as poor Bess used to love me. There is Mr. Brinjes; tell him—why, tell him that he must look for another sailor to steer his ship among the islands of the Southern Seas."

"Jack," I said, "it is terrible."

"Yes, it is terrible. It is very terrible, lad. But it must be endured. Trust me that I shall not stand snivelling before the file of Marines at the end. That is, unless there be another—" Here he paused, and in his eyes there was apparent a look of such terror as I have never since seen in any man's eyes, while his cheeks turned white, and drops stood upon his brow. "Unless," he said again, "there comes another—" Here he broke off again. "Luke," he said, "if at the end I die craven, know of a surety that I die unforgiven, and that my soul is lost. But it cannot be that death will not atone." So he paced his cabin once or twice, and then, becoming more calm, he sat down again. "Luke, dear lad, I wished to see thee, but only thee, for the present. I have much to say. And first—of Bess. Do you know the words she said to me before I sailed?"

"I know them. Bess told me herself."

"Does any other person know them?"

"No one, I believe."

"Let her hold her tongue, then, lest they take her for a witch. Why, I know full well that she is no witch; and as for those words, they were spoken by her, but yet were not her own. I laughed when I heard them. The second time I heard them I laughed no longer. And now I will tell thee the whole truth, Luke; but keep it to thyself until I am dead, when I wish thee—nay, I charge thee—to tell the Admiral and thy father. I crowded all sail in pursuit of the enemy; I prepared for action with as light a heart as a man can have who has a stout ship and a lusty crew. My guns they were loaded, and my men were at quarters, every man stripped to the skin, a good ration of rum served round, and as hearty a spirit as ever animated a British crew. I was as certain of making a prize of the *Malicieuse* as I am now certain of being tried and sentenced to death. Suddenly, we being by this time well within range, and our men prepared to give the enemy a broadside, a shot from the Frenchman struck our bow, and sent the splinters flying. Then there came upon me a kind of dizziness, and a voice shouted—yea, shouted in my ears—though none but me heard it, 'Thou shalt be struck where thou shalt feel the blow most deeply.' I tell thee the truth, Luke. But tell no one, lest they seize poor Bess for a witch. Something (I know not what) caught my hand, and dragged me, whether I would or no—yea, compelled me—to the main-mast, and placed the lines in my hand, and forced me to haul down the flag. I know not very well what happened afterward. My men, I believe, were all smitten with stupid amazement, and made no resistance: how should they, when the flag was struck? They tell me that I cut down the First Lieutenant. Thank God I did no more than stun him! And presently, when I came to myself, I was sitting on a carronade, and the ship was a prize, and the French Commander was on the quarter-deck."

"But you recaptured the ship?"

"Why, 'twas a desperate attempt. I thought first that I would starve myself to death. But a man does not like to kill himself. And then, seeing the Frenchmen on the deck, and some of my lads for'ard under the sentries, I thought to make them kill me. Alas! they were not suffered to kill me. Some of my men were wounded, and a good many of the Frenchmen knocked o' the head; but I came out of the fight without a scratch, and the ship was ours again. That is my story, lad, in its truth."

He then told me, what indeed I knew already, the history of his passion for Bess, which was as brief as it was violent, sparing himself not at all.

"It is strange, Luke, since I took the ship again, the image of the girl hath returned to my heart. I have thought upon her daily, and I remember once more all the things that passed between us while I was waiting for my appointment to the *Tartar*. Poor Bess! She deserved a better lover. How could I ever forget her brave black eyes? See, Luke!" He drew up his sleeve and showed his left arm—he had forgotten when last he exhibited that tattoo. "See, lad, her name is ever before me. Yes, a better lover she deserved."

"She desires no better lover, Jack."

"What?" he asked. "Doth she not curse my very name?"

"Nay; she hath never cursed thee, Jack. She loves thee still: she hath always loved thee."

"A woman cannot love a man who is disgraced."

"Why? She loves the man: it is not his honor or his reputation she loves. That I have heard, but I have never understood it, concerning women, before; but now I perceive it very plainly. It is strange to us, because a man cannot love a woman without thinking of her beauty; and so we believe that a woman cannot love a man without thinking of his honor and reputation, his strength and his name. Jack, will you see this poor girl? Will you let her come to you, and tell her kindly, in your old way, that you love again, as in the past time, and so heal her bleeding heart?"

"See her? Truly, I never thought," said Jack, "that she would any more come to me. I thought that she must be like Aaron Fletcher—only anxious to see me swing. Why, if the poor child can find any comfort or happiness in coming here, let her come, in God's name. As for me, dear lad, there is a load upon my heart which I thought would be with me till my death. But if she will forgive me, I think that load will be removed, and I can die with easier mind. Poor Bess! she will but get her lover in time to see him die. My heart bleeds for her. Go quick—bring her to me. Let me at least ask her forgiveness."

You may be sure that I lost no time in taking this fond message to Bess.

I looked that she would burst into weeping and sobbing. But she did not.

"I knew," she said, "that I should get my lover back. Now care I for nothing more. For if he must die, so must I die also. Death itself shall not have power—no, death shall have no power to separate us. On the day that he dies shall I die too. He loves me again. Why, do you think I care what may happen to either of us, since he loves me still?"

I led her on board, and took her to the Captain's cabin, but at the door I turned away, and so left them alone.

Oh! behind that closed door what prayers and vows were uttered, what tears were shed, what tender embraces were exchanged, when, in the presence of shame and death, those hapless lovers met again!

## CHAPTER XLII.

### OF THE COURT-MARTIAL.

Nearly all that follows is matter of history, and may be read in the gazettes and papers of the day. Yet, for the sake of completing the history, it shall be set forth in order.

The court-martial was appointed to be held on board the *Calypso*, on the forenoon of Monday, February the 2d.

On that day it was accordingly held, the Hon. John Cheveril, Rear-Admiral of the White, and Admiral of the Port, being the President. The Court consisted of Captains Richard Orde, Frederick Drake, Saltren Willett, Peter Denis, and Joshua Rowley. Captain Petherick should also have sat, but he begged to be excused, on the ground of personal friendship with the defendant. He was present, however, and sat at the back of the court, with as sad a countenance as ever I beheld. (As for our Admiral, he was in his bedroom with an attack of gout, which even Mr. Brinjes could not cure.) The court was thrown open to all. Few of the friends of the accused officer were present, but there was a great throng of people, not only from Deptford Town, but also from London. Truly, a court-martial on whose decision rests the honor, if not the life, of a man, is a species of judicial investigation which strikes awe upon the beholder, even more than the aspect of the Judge, jury, and counsel in a civil court, the solemnity of the occasion being heightened and set off by the uniforms of the Judges and the naked weapons of the sentries and guards.

The Court was opened by the Deputy Judge-Advocate. He was only an attorney of Deptford, by name Richard Pendlebury, but he wore a black gown over his coat, and being provided with a full wig, which might have been proper even to a sergeant-at-law, and wearing much lace to his bosom and his sleeves, and being a big burly gentleman with a full round voice, he looked as full of authority as a King's Counsel. He began the proceedings by reading the warrant of the Right Honorable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, empowering the Admiral to assemble courts-martial. This done, the President ordered that Captain Easterbrook should be brought before the Court. My heart beat fast and my throat choked when he appeared, bearing himself proudly, but with pale cheek, dressed, if one may say so, like a bride for her wedding, wearing his best uniform, his richest lace, and white leather gloves. Never, surely, did officer of the King's Navy bear himself more gallantly. Once only I saw his cheek flush scarlet. 'Twas when, in the old familiar way, he clapped his hand to his side for the adjustment of his sword. Alas! he had no sword. That had been taken from him, and was now lying on the table before the President, the hilt toward the prisoner. Then he bowed to his judges and stood upright, and to outward show calm and collected, though a tempest of shame and despair was raging within.

Then the Deputy Judge-Advocate administered the oath to the members of the Court and took it himself in the form prescribed, after which he read the charge against the defendant, as follows:

"Gentlemen,—The charge against Captain John Easterbrook, Commander of the *Calypso*, here present before your honorable Court, is that on the fourth day of December, 1759, he did cowardly and treacherously surrender and yield up his ship to the enemy, and he is here to answer this charge accordingly."

He then read the Fifteenth of the Articles of War, as follows:

"Every person in or belonging to the fleet who shall desert to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, or shall run away with any of his Majesty's ships or vessels of war, or any ordnance, ammunition, stores, or provision belonging thereto, to the weakening of the service, or shall yield up the same, cowardly or treacherously, to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, being convicted of any such offence by the sentence of the court-martial, shall suffer death."

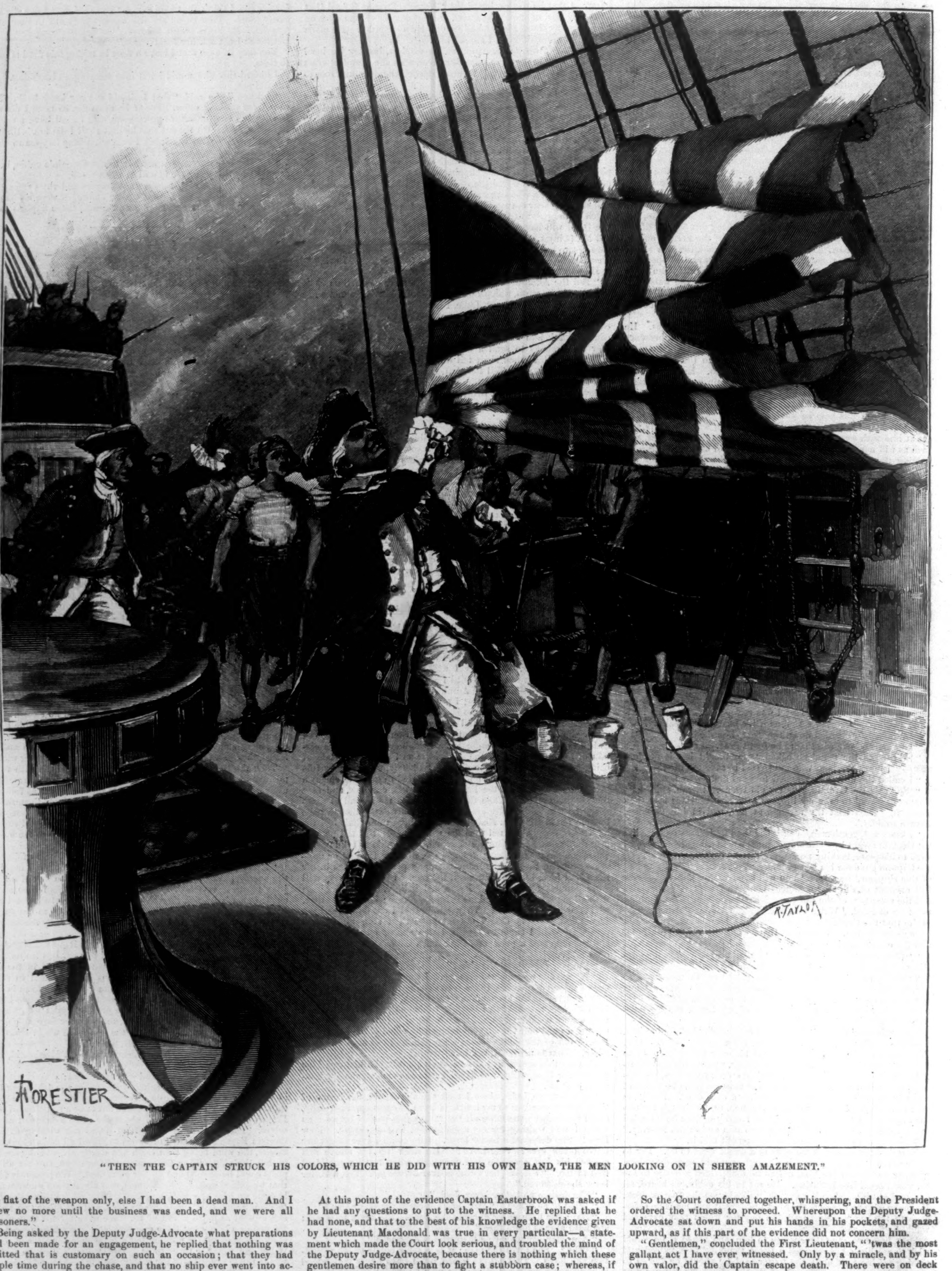
These preliminaries being completed, the Deputy Judge-Advocate proceeded to call his witnesses, and to each in turn administered an oath, which is more awful than that used in the civil courts, because it lays upon the witness an obligation to reveal everything that he knows concerning the case. The form is this:

"I, A. B., do most solemnly swear that in the evidence I shall give before the Court respecting the present trial I will, whether demanded of me by question or not, and whether favorable or unfavorable to the prisoner, declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me, GOD!"

The first witness called was Lieutenant Colin Macdonald, First Lieutenant of the *Calypso*.

His deposition was short, and was as follows:

"At daybreak on the morning of December the 4th, being then in company with the frigate *Resolute*, Captain Boys, we sighted three ships, which we presently made out to be a squadron of three French frigates, apparently of about the same armament as ourselves. They bore away at sight of us, as not wishing to fight. Captain Easterbrook gave the word to crowd all sail and up hammocks, the wind being then fresh and nearly aft, and the sea lively, but the ship sailing free and not lying down, so that all her ports could be opened and all her guns fired. We presently found that we gained upon the Frenchmen, and about noon we were nearly come up with the *Malicieuse*, the slowest of the three, the *Resolute* being then half a mile or so astern, and the other two French ships about as much ahead of us. We were by this time cleared for action, the men at their quarters, and everything reported in readiness, looking for nothing but a close engagement, and a pretty hot one, with the three ships. The Captain's plan, he told me, was to range alongside of the enemy, pour in his broadside, grapple, and board, thinking that the *Resolute* would do the like, and so we might capture the squadron. And this we could have done, having faster vessels than the enemy, and Captain Easterbrook being, as I take it, the smartest handler of a ship in the service, though so young a man. But the Frenchman was not disposed to allow of this if he could help it. Therefore he began to let fly with the stern-chasers, being, like most of his nation, amply provided with these helps to running away. His first shot knocked away part of our figure-head, the splinters flying about the deck; but no one harmed. Just then, to our utmost consternation, the Captain turned pale, and ran to the main-mast, where, with his own hands, he began to lower the colors. I ran to him, crying, 'Captain, for God's sake, consider what you are doing!' Whereupon he drew his sword, and cut me down over the head, but fortunately with



"THEN THE CAPTAIN STRUCK HIS COLORS, WHICH HE DID WITH HIS OWN HAND, THE MEN LOOKING ON IN SHEER AMAZEMENT."

the flat of the weapon only, else I had been a dead man. And I knew no more until the business was ended, and we were all prisoners."

Being asked by the Deputy Judge-Advocate what preparations had been made for an engagement, he replied that nothing was omitted that is customary on such an occasion; that they had ample time during the chase, and that no ship ever went into action better prepared. Immediately on sighting the enemy the bo's'n and his mates piped to stow hammocks; the carpenter and his mates were ready with their mauls and plugs; the gunner and his quarter-gunners examined and reported on all the cannon. When the ship was within a mile of the enemy the drums beat to arms, and the bo's'n and his mates piped "all hands to quarters" at every hatchway. Then every man stripped to the waist, and repaired to his proper place; a ration of rum was served out; the hatches were laid; the Marines were drawn up on the quarter-deck and fo'ksle; lastly, the lashings of the great guns were let loose, the tompions withdrawn, and the guns run out at all the ports. In one word, there was no point omitted that a Commander who knows his business would neglect, and everything in such order as the most resolute Captain could desire.

At this point of the evidence Captain Easterbrook was asked if he had any questions to put to the witness. He replied that he had none, and that to the best of his knowledge the evidence given by Lieutenant Macdonald was true in every particular—a statement which made the Court look serious, and troubled the mind of the Deputy Judge-Advocate, because there is nothing which these gentlemen desire more than to fight a stubborn case; whereas, if an officer pleads guilty, and throws himself upon the mercy of the Court, he has no chance to show his cleverness.

"With permission of the Court," said the First Lieutenant, "I will now give evidence as to the recapture of the ship."

"I submit to the Court," said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, "that the recapture of the ship has nothing to do with the charge against Captain Easterbrook, namely, that he did cowardly and treacherously yield up his vessel."

"Gentlemen," said the Lieutenant, "with respect. If the ship had not been recaptured, the Court could not have been held. And if it had not been for the Captain, the ship would never have been recaptured. For he did a thing which, I venture to maintain, no other man in the service would have done, when he engaged, single-handed, the whole of the crew in charge of the prize."

So the Court conferred together, whispering, and the President ordered the witness to proceed. Whereupon the Deputy Judge-Advocate sat down and put his hands in his pockets, and gazed upward, as if this part of the evidence did not concern him.

"Gentlemen," concluded the First Lieutenant, "'twas the most gallant act I have ever witnessed. Only by a miracle, and by his own valor, did the Captain escape death. There were on deck thirty Frenchmen, all armed, and he with nothing but the sword which he tore from the French Commander. And to back him only a dozen unarmed men, who, to tell the truth, for I was among them, were taken by surprise, and would never have plucked up heart save for the example of the Captain. The first man to join him was a Marine named Aaron Fletcher, who seized a rammer, and, armed with this weapon alone, stood by the Captain, playing a man's part indeed; but for him, the Captain would have been cut down a dozen times. But, gentlemen, that the ship was recaptured is due to nobody but to the desperate valor of the Captain himself."

The Court asked Captain Easterbrook whether he had any questions to put on this head, but he had none. Wherefore Lieutenant Macdonald stepped aside, and made way for the next witness.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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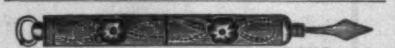

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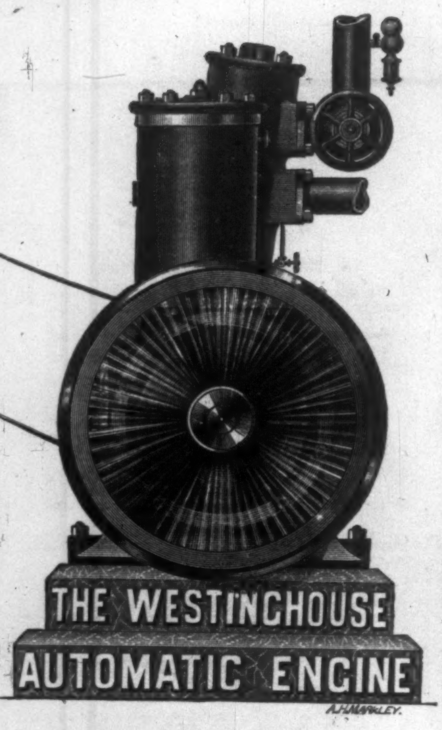


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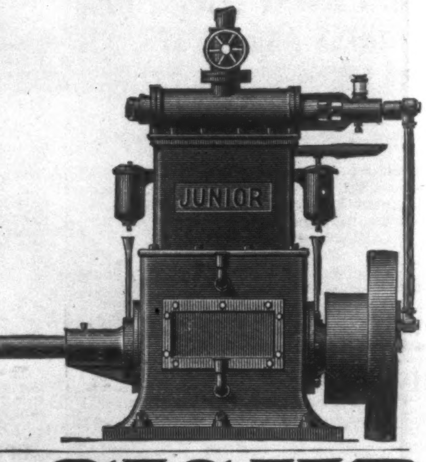


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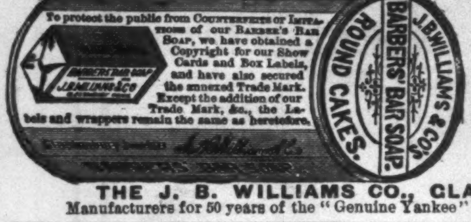


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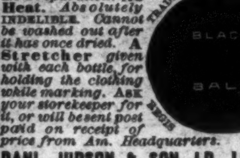


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"TURKEY IN EGYPT—CHRISTMAS AT CAIRO."

# SHE: A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE.*

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,
Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Jess," etc.

## XIX.—(*Continued.*)

"GIVE ME A BLACK GOAT!"

At this moment a terrified *bah!* announced that the poor goat had been sacrificed, and the next minute a woman ran up with a saucer full of the blood. This the possessed creature, who was then raving and foaming her wildest, seized and *drank*, and was instantly recovered, and without a trace of hysteria, or fits, or being possessed, or whatever dreadful thing it was she was suffering from. She stretched her arms, smiled faintly, and walked quietly back to the dancers, who presently withdrew in a double line as they had come, leaving the space between us and the bonfire deserted.

I thought the entertainment(*sic*) was now over, and feeling rather queer, was about to ask *She* if we could rise, when suddenly what at first I took to be a baboon came hopping round the fire, and was instantly met upon the other side by a lion, or rather a human being dressed in a lion's skin. Then came a goat, then a man wrapped in an ox's hide, with the horns wobbling about in a ludicrous way. After him followed a blesbok, then an impala, then a koodoo, then more goats, and many other animals, including a girl sewn up in the shining scaly hide of a boa-constrictor, several yards of which trailed along the ground behind her. When all the beasts had collected they began to dance about in a lumbering, unnatural fashion, and to imitate the sounds produced by the respective animals they represented, till the whole air was alive with roars and bleating and the hissing of snakes. This went on for a longtime, till, getting tired of the pantomime, I asked Ayesha if there would be any objection to Leo and myself walking round to inspect the human torches, and as she had nothing to say against it, we started, striking round to the left. After looking at one or two of the flaming bodies, we were about to return, thoroughly disgusted with the grotesque weirdness of the spectacle, when our attention was attracted by one of the dancers, a particularly active leopard, that had separated itself from its fellow-beasts, and was whisking about in our immediate neighborhood, but gradually drawing into a spot where the shadow was darkest, equidistant between two of the flaming mummies. Drawn by curiosity, we followed it, when suddenly it darted past us into the shadows beyond, and as it did so, erected itself and whispered, "Come," in a voice that we both recognized as that of Ustane. Without waiting to consult me, Leo turned and followed her into the outer darkness, and I, feeling sick enough at heart, went after them. The leopard crawled on for about fifty paces—a sufficient distance to be quite beyond the light of the fire and torches—and then Leo came up with it, or rather with Ustane.

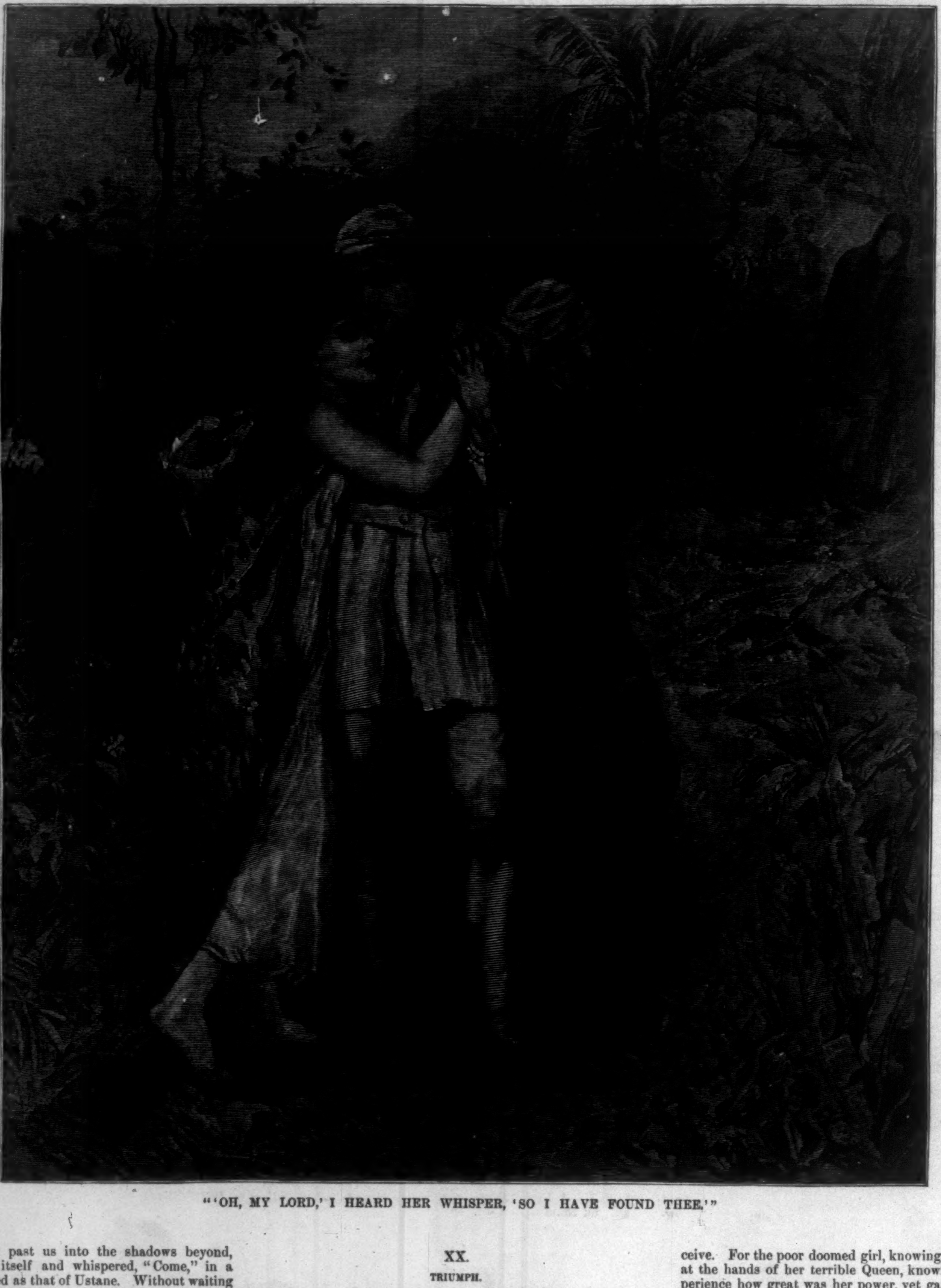
"Oh, my lord," I heard her whisper, "so I have found thee. Listen! I am in peril of my life from '*She-who-must-be-obeyed*.' Surely the Baboon has told thee how she drove me from thee? I love thee, my lord, and thou art mine according to the custom of the country. I saved thy life. My Lion, wilt thou cast me off now?"

"Of course not," ejaculated Leo. "I have been wondering whither thou hadst gone. Let us go and explain matters to the Queen."

"Nay, nay; she would slay us. Thou knowest not her power; the Baboon there, he knoweth, for he saw. Nay, there is but one way: if thou wilt cleave to me, thou must flee with me across the marshes even now, and then perchance we may escape."

"For Heaven's sake, Leo," I began, but she broke in.

* Begun in Harper's Weekly No. 1554.



"'OH, MY LORD,' I HEARD HER WHISPER, 'SO I HAVE FOUND THEE.'"

"Nay, listen not to him. Swift—be swift; death is in the air we breathe. Even now, mayhap, *She* heareth us," and without more ado, she proceeded to back her arguments by throwing herself into his arms. As she did so the leopard's head slipped from her hair. I saw the three white finger-marks upon it, gleaming faintly in the starlight. Once more realizing the desperate nature of the situation, I was about to interpose, for I knew that Leo was not too strong-minded where women were concerned, when—oh, horror!—I heard a little silvery laugh behind me. I turned round, and there was *She* herself, and with her Billali and two male mutes. I gasped and nearly sank to the ground, for I knew that such a situation must result in some dreadful tragedy, of which it seemed exceedingly probable to me that I should be the first victim. As for Ustane, she untwined her arms and covered her eyes with her hands, while Leo, not knowing the full terror of the position, merely colored up, and looked as silly as a man caught in such a trap would naturally do.

## XX.

TRIUMPH.

Then followed a moment of the most painful silence that I ever endured. It was broken by Ayesha, who addressed herself to Leo.

"Nay, now, my lord and guest," she said, in her softest tones, which yet had the ring of steel about them, "look not so bashful. Surely the sight was a pretty one—the leopard and the lion!"

"Oh, hang it all!" said Leo, in English.

"And thou, Ustane," she went on, "surely I should have passed thee by had not the light fallen on the white across thy hair. Well! well! the dance is done—see, the tapers have burnt down, and all things end in darkness and in ashes. So thou thoughtest it a fit time for love, Ustane, my servant—and I, dreaming not that I could be disobeyed, thought thee already far away."

"Play not with me," moaned the wretched woman; "slay me, and let there be an end."

"Nay, why? It is not well to go so swift from the hot lips of love down to the cold mouth of the grave," and she made a motion to the mutes, who instantly stepped up and caught the girl by either arm. With an oath Leo sprung upon the nearest, and hurled him to the ground, and then stood over him with his face set and his fist ready.

Again Ayesha laughed. "It was well thrown, my guest; thou hast a strong arm for one who so late was sick. But now out of thy courtesy I pray thee let that man live and do my bidding. He shall not harm the girl; the night air grows chill, and I would welcome her in mine own place. Surely she whom thou dost favor shall be favored of me also."

I took Leo by the arm, and pulled him from the prostrate mute, and he, half bewildered, obeyed the pressure. Then we all set out for the cave across the plateau, where a great pile of white human ashes was all that remained of the fire that had lit the dancing, for the dancers had vanished.

In due course we gained Ayesha's boudoir—all too soon it seemed to me, having a sad presage of what was to come lying heavy on my heart.

Ayesha seated herself upon her cushions, and having dismissed Job and Billali, by signs bade the mutes tend the lamps and retire, all save one girl, who was her favorite personal attendant. We three remained standing, the unfortunate Ustane a little to the left of the rest of us.

"Now, O, Holly," Ayesha began, "how came it that thou who didst hear my words bidding this evil-doer"—and she pointed to Ustane—"to go from hence—thou at whose prayer I did weakly spare her life—how came it, I say, that thou wast a sharer in what I saw to-night? Answer, and for thine own sake, I say, speak the truth, for I am not minded to hear lies upon this matter."

"It was by accident, O Queen," I answered. "I knew naught of it."

"I do believe thee, O Holly," she answered, coldly; "and well it is for thee that I do. Then does all the guilt rest upon her."

"I don't see any particular guilt about it," broke in Leo. "She is not anybody else's wife, and it appears that she has married me according to the custom of this awful place, so who is the worse? Anyway, madam," he went on, "whatever she has done, I have done too, so if she is to be punished, let me be punished also; and I tell thee," he went on, working himself up into a fury, "that if thou biddest one of thosedeaf-and-dumb villains to touch her again, I will tear him to pieces." And he looked as though he meant it.

Ayesha listened in icy silence, and made no remark. When he had finished, however, she addressed Ustane.

"Hast thou aught to say, woman? Thou silly straw, thou feather, who didst think to float toward thy passion's petty ends, even against the great wind of my will! Tell me, for I fain would understand. Why didst thou this thing?"

And then I think I saw the most tremendous exhibition of moral courage and intrepidity that it is possible to conceive. For the poor doomed girl, knowing what she had to expect at the hands of her terrible Queen, knowing, too, from bitter experience how great was her power, yet gathered herself together, and out of the very depths of her despair found materials to defy her.

"I did it, O Queen," she answered, drawing herself up to the full of her stately height, and throwing back the panther-skin off her head, "because my love is stronger than the grave. I did it because my life without this man whom my heart chose would be but a living death. Therefore did I risk my life; and now that I know that it is forfeit to thine anger, yet am I glad that I did risk it, and pay it away in the risking, ay, because he embraced me once, and told me that he yet loved me."

Here Ayesha half rose from her couch, and then sank down again.

"I have no magic," went on Ustane, her rich voice ringing strong and full, "and I am not a Queen, nor do I live forever, but a woman's heart is heavy to sink through waters, however deep, O Queen. And a woman's eyes are quick to see, even through thy veil, O Queen.

"Listen: I know it: thou dost love this man thyself, and therefore wouldst thou destroy me who stand across thy path. Ay, I die—I die, and go into the darkness, nor know I whither I go.

But this I know. There is a light shining in my breast, and by that light, as by a lamp, I see the truth and the future that I shall not share unroll itself before me like a scroll. When first I knew my lord," and she pointed to Leo, "I knew also that death would be the bridal gift he gave me; it rushed upon me of a sudden, but I turned not back, being ready to pay the price, and, behold, death is here! And now, even as I knew that, so do I, standing on the steps of doom, know that thou shalt not reap the profits of thy crime. Mine he is, and though thy beauty shine like a sun among the stars, mine shall he remain for thee. Never here upon this earth shall he look thee in the eyes and call thee wife. Thou, too, art doomed, I see"—and her voice rang like the cry of an inspired prophetess; "ah, I see"—

Then came an answering cry of mingled rage and terror. I turned my head. Ayesha had risen, and was standing with her outstretched hand pointing at Ustane, who had suddenly stopped speaking. I gazed at the poor woman, and as I gazed there grew upon her face that same woful, fixed expression of terror that I had seen once before when she had broken out into her wild chant. Her eyes grew large, her nostrils dilated, and her lips blanched.

Ayesha said nothing; she made no sound, she only drew herself up, stretched out her arm, and, her tall veiled frame quivering like an aspen leaf, appeared to look fixedly at her victim. Even as she did so Ustane put her hands to her head, uttered one piercing scream, turned round twice, and then fell backward with a thud prone upon the floor. Both Leo and myself rushed to her—she was stone-dead—blasted into death by some mysterious electric agency or overwhelming will-force whereof the dread *She* had command.

For a moment Leo did not quite realize what had happened. But when he did, his face was awful to see. With a savage oath he rose from beside the corpse, and turning, literally sprang at Ayesha. But she had been watching, and seeing him coming, stretched out her hand again, and he came staggering back toward me, and would have fallen had I not caught him. Afterward he told me that he felt as though he had suddenly received a violent blow in the chest, and, what is more, cowed as though all the manhood had been taken out of him.

Then Ayesha spoke. "Forgive me, my guest," she said, softly, addressing him, "if I have shocked thee with my justice."

"Forgive thee, thou fiend," roared poor Leo, wringing his hands in his rage and grief—"forgive thee, thou murderess! By Heaven, I will kill thee if I can!"

"Nay, nay," she answered, in the same soft voice, "thou dost not understand—the time has come for thee to learn. Thou art my love, my Kallikrates—my Beautiful, my Strong! For two thousand years, Kallikrates, have I waited for thee, and now at length thou hast come back to me; and as for this woman," pointing to the corpse, "she stood between me and thee, and therefore I have removed her, Kallikrates."

"It is an accursed lie!" screamed Leo. "My name is not Kallikrates! I am Leo Vincey; my ancestor was Kallikrates—at least I believe he was."

"Ah, thou sayest it; thine ancestor was Kallikrates, and thou, even thou, art Kallikrates come back—and mine own dear lord!"

"I am not Kallikrates, and as for being thy lord, or having anything to do with thee, I had rather be the lord of a fiend from hell, for she would be better than thou."

"Sayest thou so—sayest thou so, Kallikrates? Nay, but thou hast not seen me for so many years that no memory remains. Yet am I very fair, Kallikrates!"

"I hate thee, murderess, and I do not wish to see thee. What is to me how fair thou art? I hate thee, I say."

"Yet within a very little space shalt thou creep to my knee, and swear that thou dost love me," answered Ayesha, with a sweet, mocking laugh. "Come, there is no time like the present time; here, before this dead girl who loved thee, let us put it to the proof.

"Look now on me, Kallikrates!" and with a sudden motion she shook her gauzy covering from her, and stood forth in her low kirtle and her snaky zone, in her glorious, radiant beauty and her imperial grace, rising from her wrappings, as it were, like Venus from the wave, or Galatea from her marble, or a beatified spirit from the tomb. She stood forth, and fixed her deep and glowing eyes upon his own, and I saw his clinched fists unclasp, and his set and quivering features relax beneath her gaze. I saw his wonder and astonishment grow into admiration, and then into fascination; and the more he struggled the more I saw the power of her dread beauty fasten on him and take possession of his senses, drugging them, and drawing the heart out of him. Did I not know the process? Had not I, who was twice his age, gone through it myself? Was I not going through it afresh even then, though her sweet and passionate gaze was not for me? Yes, alas, I was. Alas, that I should have to confess that at that very moment I was rent by mad and furious jealousy. I could have flown at his throat, shame upon me! That woman had confounded and almost destroyed my moral sense, as she was bound to confound all who looked upon her superhuman loveliness. But, somehow, I do not know how, I got the better of myself, and once more turned to see the climax of the tragedy.

"Oh, heavens!" gasped Leo; "art thou a woman?"

"A woman in truth—in very truth—and thine own spouse, Kallikrates!" she answered, stretching out her rounded ivory arms toward him, and smiling, ah, so sweetly!

He looked and looked, and slowly I perceived that he was drawing nearer to her. Suddenly his eye fell upon the corpse of poor Ustane, and he shuddered and stopped.

"How can I?" he said, hoarsely. "Thou art a murderess. She loved me."

Observe, he was already forgetting that he had loved her.

"It is naught," she murmured, and her voice sounded sweet as the night wind passing through the trees. "It is naught at all. If I have sinned, let my beauty answer for my sin. If I have sinned, it is for love of thee; let my sin, therefore, be put away and forgotten;" and once more she stretched out her arms and whispered, "Come," and then in another few seconds it was over. I saw him struggle—I saw him even turn to fly; but her eyes drew him stronger than iron bonds, and the magic of her beauty and concentrated will and passion entered into him and overpowered him—ay, even there—in the presence of the body of the woman who had loved him well enough to die for him. It sounds horrible and wicked enough, but he cannot be blamed too much, and be sure his sin will find him out. The temptress who drew him into evil was more than human, and her beauty was greater than the loveliness of the daughters of men.

"Perchance thou dost not believe my word, Kallikrates—perchance thou thinkest that I do delude thee, and that I have not lived these many years, and that thou hast not been born again to me. Now will I show thee, and thee also, my Holly, who dost stand staring there as though of a truth thou hadst taken root in this unkindly soil. Bear each one of you a lamp, and follow after me whither I shall lead ye."

Without pausing to think—indeed, speaking for myself, I had almost abandoned the function in circumstances under which to think seemed to be absolutely useless, since thought fell hourly helpless against a black wall of wonder—we took the lamps and followed her. Going to the end of her "boudoir," she raised a curtain, and revealed a little stair of the sort that was so common in these dim caves of Kôr. As we hurried down the stair I observed that the steps were worn in the centre to such an extent that some of them had been reduced from seven and a half inches, at which I guessed their original height, to about three and a half. Now, as all the other steps that I had seen in the caves had been practically unworn, as was to be expected, seeing that the only traffic that ever passed upon them was that of those who bore a fresh burden to the tomb, this fact struck my notice with that curious pertinacity with which little things do strike us when our minds are absolutely overwhemed with a rush of powerful sensations, beaten flat, as it were, like a sea beneath a hurricane, so that every little object on the surface stands up like a mountain. At the bottom of the staircase I stood and stared at the worn steps, and *She*, turning, saw me.

"Wonderest thou whose are the feet that have worn away the rock, my Holly?" she asked. "Behold! they are mine—even mine own light feet! I can remember when the stairs were fresh and level, but for two thousand years have I gone down hither day by day, and see, my sandals have worn out the solid rock."

I made no answer, but I do not think that anything that I had heard or seen brought home to my limited understanding so clear a sense of this being's overwhelming antiquity as that hard rock hollowed out by her soft white feet. How many millions of times must she have passed up and down that stair to bring about such a result?

The stair led to a tunnel, and a few paces down the tunnel was one of the usual curtain-hung doorways, a glance at which told me that it was the same where I had been a witness of that terrible scene by the leaping flame. I recognized the pattern of the curtain, and the sight of it brought the whole event vividly before my eyes, and made me tremble even at its memory. Ayesha entered the tomb (for it was a tomb), and we followed her—I, for one, rejoicing that the mystery of the place was about to be cleared up, and yet afraid to face its solution.

## XXI.

### THE DEAD AND LIVING MEET.

"Behold the place where I have slept for these two thousand years," said Ayesha, taking the lamp from Leo's hand and holding it above her head. Its rays fell upon a little hollow in the floor, where I had seen the leaping flame, but the fire was out now. They fell upon the white form stretched there beneath its wrappings upon its bed of stone, upon the fretted carving of the tomb, and upon another shelf of stone opposite the one on which the body lay, and separated from it by the breadth of the cave.

"Here," went on Ayesha, laying her hand upon the rock—"here have I slept night by night for all these generations, with but a cloak to cover me. It did not become me that I should lie soft, when my spouse yonder," and she pointed to the rigid form, "lay stiff in death. Here night by night have I slept in his cold company, till, thou seest, this thick slab, like the stairs down which we passed, has worn thin with the tossing of my form—so faithful have I been to thee even in thy space of sleep, Kallikrates. And now, my love, thou shalt see a wonderful thing—living, thou shalt behold thyself dead—for well have I tended thee during all these years, Kallikrates. Art thou prepared?"

We made no answer, but gazed at each other with frightened eyes, the whole scene was so dreadful and so solemn. Ayesha advanced, and laid her hand upon the corner of the shroud, and once more spoke.

"Be not affrighted," she said. "Though the thing seem wonderful to thee—all we who live have thus lived before; nor is the very shape that holds us a stranger to the sun. Only we know it not, because memory writes no record, and earth hath gathered in the earth she lent us, for none have saved our glory from the grave. But I, by my arts and by the arts of those dead men of Kôr which I have learned, have held thee back, O Kallikrates, from the dust, that the waxy stamp of beauty on thy face should ever rest before mine eye. 'Twas a mask that memory might fill, serving to fashion out thy presence from the past, and give it strength to wander in the habitations of my thought, clad in a mummery of life that stayed my appetite with visions of dead days.

"Behold now, let the dead and living meet! Across the gulf of Time they still are one. Time hath no power against Identity, though sleep in mercy hath blotted out the tablets of our mind, and with oblivion sealed the sorrows up that else would hound us on from life to life, stuffing the brain with gathered misery till it burst in the madness of uttermost despair. Still are they one, for the wrappings of our sleep shall roll away as thunder clouds before the wind; the frozen voices of the past shall melt in music like mountain snows beneath the sun; and the weeping and the laughter of the lost hours shall be heard once more sweetly echoing up the cliffs of immeasurable time.

"Ay, the sleep shall roll away, and the voices shall be heard, when down the completed chain, whereof our each existence is a link, the lightning of the Spirit hath passed to work out the purpose of our being; quickening and fusing those separated days of life, and shaping them to a staff whereon we may safely lean as we wend to our appointed fate.

"Therefore, have no fear, Kallikrates, when thou—living, and but lately born—shalt look upon thine own departed self, who breathed and died so long ago. I do but turn one page in thy Book of Being, and show thee what is writ thereon.

"*Behold!*"

With a sudden motion she drew the shroud from the cold form, and let the lamp-light play upon it. I looked, and then shrank back terrified, since, say what she might in explanation, the sight was an uncanny one—for her explanations were beyond the grasp of our finite minds, and when they were separated from the mists of vague esoteric philosophy, and brought into conflict with the cold and horrifying fact, did not do much to break its force. For there, stretched upon the stone bier before us, robed in white and perfectly preserved, was what appeared to be the body of Leo Vincey. I stared from Leo, standing there alive, to Leo lying there dead, and could see no difference, except, perhaps, that the body on the bier looked older. Feature for feature they were the same, even down to the crop of little golden curls, which was Leo's most uncommon beauty. It even seemed to me, as I looked, that the expression on the dead man's face resembled that which I had sometimes seen upon Leo's when he was plunged into profound sleep. I can only sum up the closeness of the resemblance by saying that I never saw twins so exactly similar as that dead and living pair.

I turned to see what effect was produced upon Leo by this sight of his dead self, and found it to be one of partial stupefaction. He stood for two or three minutes staring and said nothing, and when at last he spoke it was only to ejaculate,

"Cover it up and take me away."

"Nay, wait," said Ayesha, who, standing with the lamp raised above her head, flooding with its light her own rich beauty and the cold wonder of the death-clothed form upon the bier, looked more like an inspired Sybil than a woman as she rolled out her majestic sentences with a grandeur and a freedom of utterance to which I am, alas, quite unable to do justice.

"Wait; I would show thee something, that no tittle of my crime may be hidden from thee. Do thou, O Holly, open the garment on the breast of the dead Kallikrates, for perchance my lord may fear to touch himself."

I obeyed with trembling hands. It seemed a desecration and an unhallowed thing to touch that sleeping image of the live man by my side. Presently his broad chest was bare, and there upon it, right over the heart, was a wound, evidently inflicted with a spear.

"Thou seest, Kallikrates," she said. "Behold, it was I who slew thee. In the Place of Life I gave thee death. I slew thee because of the Egyptian Amenartas, whom thou didst love; for by her arts she held thy heart, and her I could not slay as but now I slew the woman, for she was too strong for me. In my haste and bitter anger I slew thee, and now for all these days have I lamented thee, and waited for thy coming. And thou hast come, and none can stand between thee and me, and of a truth now for death I will give thee life—not life eternal, for that none can give, but life and youth that shall endure for thousands upon thousands of years, and with it pomp and power and wealth, and all things that are good and beautiful, such as have been to no man before thee, nor shall be to any man who comes after. And now one thing more, and thou shalt rest and make ready for the day of thy new birth. Thou seest this body which was thine own. For all these centuries it hath been my comfort and my companion, but now I need it no more, for I have thy living presence, and it can but serve to stir up memories of that which I had fain forget. Let it therefore go back to the dust from which I kept it.

"Behold! I have prepared against this happy hour!" and going to the other shelf, or stone ledge, which, she said, had served her for a bed, she took from it a large vitrified double-handled vase, the mouth of which was tied up with a bladder. This she loosed, and then, having bent down and gently kissed the white forehead of the dead man, she undid the vase, and sprinkled its contents carefully over the form, taking, I observed, the greatest precautions against any drop of them touching us or herself, and then poured out what remained of the liquid upon the chest and head. Instantly a dense vapor arose, and the cave was filled with choking fumes that prevented us from seeing anything while the deadly acid (for I presume it was some tremendous preparation of that sort) did its work. From the spot where the body lay came a fierce fizzing and cracking sound, which ceased, however, before the fumes had cleared away. At last they were all gone, except a little cloud which still hung over the corpse. In a couple of minutes more this, too, had vanished, and wonderful as it may seem, it is a fact that on the stone bench that had supported the mortal remains of the ancient Kallikrates for so many centuries there was now nothing to be seen but a few handfuls of smoking white powder. The acid had utterly destroyed the body, and even in places eaten into the stone. Ayesha stooped down, and taking a handful of this powder in her grasp, threw it into the air, saying at the same time, in a voice of calm solemnity,

"Dust to dust!—the past to the past!—the dead to the dead! Kallikrates is dead, and is born again!"

The ashes floated noiselessly to the rocky floor, and we stood in awed silence and watched them fall, too overcome for words.

"Now leave me," she said, "and sleep if ye may. I must watch and think, for to-morrow night we go hence, and the time is long since I trod the path that we must follow."

Accordingly we bowed, and left her.

As we passed to our own apartment, I peeped into Job's sleeping-place to see how he fared, for he had gone away just before our interview with the murdered Ustane, quite prostrated by the terrors of the Amahagger festivity. He was sleeping soundly, good honest fellow that he was, and I rejoiced to think that his nerves, which, like those of most uneducated people, were far from strong, had been spared the closing scenes of that dreadful day. Then we entered our own chamber, and here at last poor Leo, who, ever since he had looked upon that frozen image of his living self, had been in a state not far removed from stupefaction, burst out into a torrent of grief. Now that he was no longer in the presence of the dreaded *She*, his sense of the awfulness of all that had happened, and more especially of the wicked murder of Ustane, who was bound to him by ties so close, broke upon him like a storm, and lashed him into an agony of remorse and terror which was painful to witness. He cursed himself—he cursed the hour when we had first seen the writing on the sherd, which was being so mysteriously verified, and bitterly he cursed his own weakness. Ayesha he dared not curse; who dared speak evil of such a woman, whose consciousness for aught we knew was watching us at this very moment?

"What am I to do, old fellow?" he groaned, resting his head against my shoulder in the extremity of his grief. "I let her be killed—not that I could help that, but within five minutes I was kissing her murderess over her body. I am a degraded brute, but I cannot resist that" (and here his voice sank) "awful sorceress. I know I shall do it again to-morrow; I know that I am in her power for always. If I never saw her again, I should never think of anybody else for all my life; I must follow her as a needle follows a magnet; I would not go away now if I could; I could not leave her, my legs would not carry me, but my mind is still clear enough, and in my mind I hate her—at least, I think so. It is all so horrible; and that—that body! What can I make of it? It was *me!* I am sold into bondage, old fellow, and she will take my soul as the price of herself!"

Then for the first time I told him that I was in a but very little better position, and I am bound to say that, notwithstanding his own infatuation, he had the decency to sympathize with me. Perhaps he did not think it worth while being jealous, realizing that he had no cause so far as the lady was concerned. I went on to suggest that we should try to run away, but we soon rejected the project as futile, and, to be perfectly honest, I do not believe that either of us would really have left Ayesha even if some superior power had suddenly offered to convey us from these gloomy caves and set us down in Cambridge. We could no more have left her than a moth can leave the light that destroys it. We were like confirmed opium-eaters: in our moments of reason we well knew the deadly nature of our pursuit, but we certainly were not prepared to abandon its terrible delights.

No doubt she was a wicked person, and no doubt she had murdered Ustane when she stood in her path, but then she was very faithful, and by a law of nature man is apt to think but lightly of a woman's crimes, especially if that woman be beautiful, and the crime be committed for the love of him.

And then, for the rest, when had such a chance ever come to a man before as that which now lay in Leo's hand? True, in uniting himself to this dread woman, he would place his life in the hand of a mysterious creature of evil tendencies, but then that would be likely enough to happen to him in any ordinary marriage. On the other hand, however, no ordinary marriage could bring him such awful beauty—for awful is the only word that can describe it—such divine devotion, such wisdom, and command over the secrets of nature, and the place and power that they must win, or lastly the royal crown of unending youth, if indeed she could give that. No; on the whole it is not wonderful that though Leo was plunged in bitter shame and grief, such as any gentleman would have felt under the circumstances, he was not ready to entertain the idea of running away from his extraordinary fortune.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]